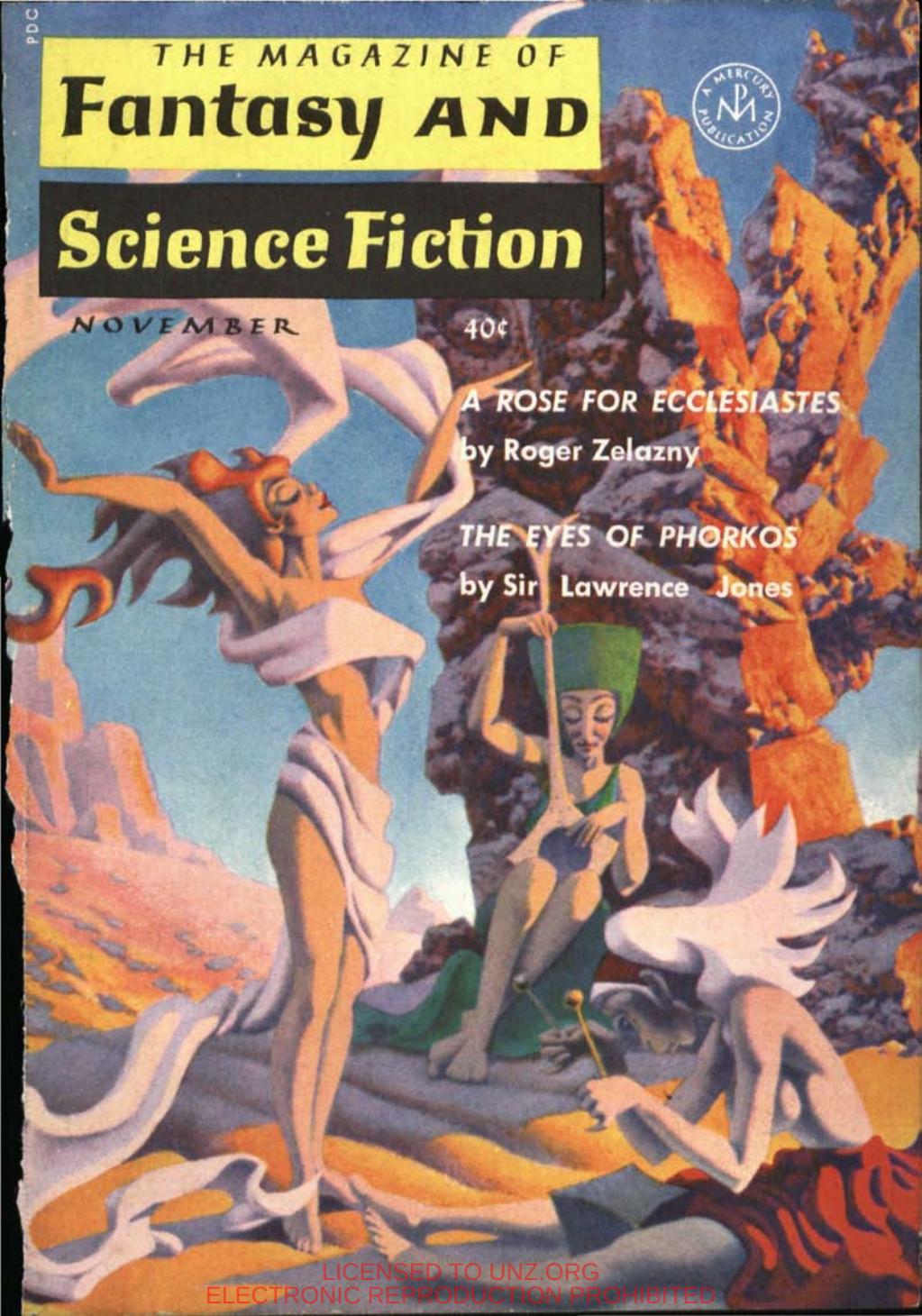

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Fantasy and Science Fiction

NOVEMBER *Including Venture Science Fiction*

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Cover by Hannes Bok (illustrating "A Rose For Ecclesiastes")

Joseph W. Ferman, PUBLISHER *Avram Davidson*, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Isaac Asimov, SCIENCE EDITOR *Edward L. Ferman*, MANAGING EDITOR

Ted White, ASSISTANT EDITOR

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In this issue . . .

Music is something the world can never have too much of, and it does not very often supply a theme for SF stories. It supplies a poignant one for a story by **LLOYD BIGGLE, JR.** At the other end of the spectrum is a real weirdo about men . . . er . . . well . . . by **S. DORMAN.** A good solid chunk of short novel about men, marble, and The Isles of Greece by **SIR LAWRENCE JONES** is balanced by a vivid little terror tale of **RAY NELSON**'s. **PHILIP WINSOR** gives us a glimpse of wisdom ordained out of the mouths of babes, and the cover story is one of love, mystery, a strange planet and a dying race, by **ROGER ZELAZNY** (of whom we shall hear much more). The cover is, of course, by one of the great Science-Fantasy artists of all times, the rare and incomparable **HANNES BOK.**

Coming next month . . .

. . . is part one of a two part novel, THE TREE OF TIME, by **DAMON KNIGHT.** Need we say that it's good? Certainly not. Also scheduled is one by Your Servant To Command. The former deals with the future, the latter, with the past. In both there is, we frankly declare, a certain (of cotextual necessity) touch of modest decadence; but there will be plenty of wholesome goodies for young and old alike, as well. *Hasta la vista* . . .

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Roger Zelazny, whose first story for F&SF makes its impressive appearance below, says that he has read SF and Fantasy for as far back as he can remember, and has wanted to write it for almost as long, "but did not have much opportunity to do so until early last year when Columbia got around to giving me the M.A. for 'Two Traditions and Cyril Tourneur: An Examination of Morality and Humor In « The Revenger's Tragedy »'." *Former épée instructor, ex-Nike crewman, Mr. Zelazny is now an OASDI claims examiner with the Social Security Administration, is 25 years old, claims that he is dreadfully lazy and likes beer . . . All the elements of Classical Old-Fashioned Science Fiction are here in this story of a Mars "where the sun is a tarnished penny . . . the wind is a whip [and] two moons play at hotrod games"—but the author's wide-ranging mind and perceptive pen bring us new lamps for old.*

A ROSE FOR ECCLESIASTES

by Roger Zelazny

I.

I WAS BUSY TRANSLATING ONE of my *Madrigals Macabre* into Martian on the morning I was found acceptable. The intercom had buzzed briefly, and I dropped my pencil and flipped on the toggle in a single motion.

"Mister G," piped Morton's youthful contralto, "the old man says I should 'get hold of that damned conceited rhymer' right away, and send him to his cabin. —Since there's only one damned conceited rhymer . . ."

"Let not ambition mock thy useful toil." I cut him off.

So, the Martians had finally made up their minds! I knocked an inch and a half of ash from a smouldering butt, and took my first drag since I had lit it. The entire month's anticipation tried hard to crowd itself into the moment, but could not quite make it. I was

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frightened to walk those forty feet and hear Emory say the words I already knew he would say; and that feeling elbowed the other one into the background.

So I finished the stanza I was translating before I got up.

It took only a moment to reach Emory's door. I knocked twice and opened it, just as he growled, "Come in."

"You wanted to see me?" I sat down quickly to save him the trouble of offering me a seat.

"That was fast. What did you do, run?"

I regarded his paternal discontent:

Little fatty flecks beneath pale eyes, thinning hair, and an Irish nose; a voice a decibel louder than anyone else's . . .

Hamlet to Claudius: "I was working."

"Hah! he snorted. "Come off it. No one's ever seen you do any of that stuff."

I shrugged my shoulders and started to rise.

"If that's what you called me down here—"

"Sit down!"

He stood up. He walked around his desk. He hovered above me and glared down. (A hard trick, even when I'm in a low chair.)

"You are undoubtedly the most antagonistic bastard I've ever had to work with!" he bellowed, like a belly-stung buffalo. "Why the hell don't you act like a human being sometime and surprise everybody? I'm willing to admit you're smart, maybe even a genius, but—oh, Hell!" He made a heaving gesture with both hands and walked back to his chair.

"Betty has finally talked them into letting you go in." His voice was normal again. "They'll receive you this afternoon. Draw one of the jeepsters after lunch, and get down there."

"Okay," I said.

"That's all, then."

I nodded, got to my feet. My hand was on the doorknob when he said:

"I don't have to tell you how important this is. Don't treat them the way you treat us."

I closed the door behind me.

I don't remember what I had for lunch. I was nervous, but I knew instinctively that I wouldn't muff it. My Boston publishers expected a Martian Idyll, or at least a Saint-Exuperay job on space flight. The National Science Association wanted a complete report on the Rise and Fall of the Martian Empire.

They would both be pleased. I knew.

That's the reason everyone is jealous—why they hate me. I always come through, and I can come through better than anyone else.

I shovelled in a final anthill of slop, and made my way to our car

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barn. I drew one jeepster and headed it toward Tirellian.

Flames of sand, lousy with iron oxide, set fire to the buggy. They swarmed over the open top and bit through my scarf; they set to work pitting my goggles.

The jeepster, swaying and panting like a little donkey I once rode through the Himalayas, kept kicking me in the seat of the pants. The Mountains of Tirellian shuffled their feet and moved toward me at a cockeyed angle.

Suddenly I was heading uphill, and I shifted gears to accommodate the engine's braying. Not like Gobi, not like the Great Southwestern Desert, I mused. Just red, just dead . . . without even a cactus.

I reached the crest of the hill, but I had raised too much dust to see what was ahead. It didn't matter, though, I have a head full of maps. I bore to the left and downhill, adjusting the throttle. A cross-wind and solid ground beat down the fires. I felt like Ulysses in Malebolge—with a terza-rima speech in one hand and an eye out for Dante.

I sounded a rock pagoda and arrived.

Betty waved as I crunched to a halt, then jumped down.

"Hi," I choked, unwinding my scarf and shaking out a pound and a half of grit. "Like, where do I go and who do I see?"

She permitted herself a brief Germanic giggle—more at my starting a sentence with "like" than at my discomfort—then she started talking. (She is a top linguist, so a word from the Village Idiom still tickles her!)

I appreciate her precise, furry talk; informational, and all that. I had enough in the way of social pleasantries before me to last at least the rest of my life. I looked at her chocolate-bar eyes and perfect teeth, at her sun-bleached hair, close-cropped to the head (I hate blondes!), and decided that she was in love with me.

"Mr. Gallinger, the Matriarch is waiting inside to be introduced. She has consented to open the Temple records for your study." She paused here to pat her hair and squirm a little. Did my gaze make her nervous?

"They are religious documents, as well as their only history," she continued, "sort of like the Mahabharata. She expects you to observe certain rituals in handling them, like repeating the sacred words when you turn pages—she will teach you the system."

I nodded quickly, several times.

"Fine, let's go in."

"Uh—" she paused. "Do not forget their Eleven Forms of Politeness and Degree. They take matters of form quite seriously—and do not get into any discussions over the equality of the sexes—"

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"I know all about their taboos," I broke in. "Don't worry. I've lived in the Orient, remember?"

She dropped her eyes and seized my hand. I almost jerked it away.

"It will look better if I enter leading you."

I swallowed my comments and followed her, like Samson in Gaza.

Inside, my last thought met with a strange correspondence. The Matriarch's quarters were a rather abstract version of what I imagine the tents of the tribes of Israel to have been like. Abstract, I say, because it was all frescoed brick, peaked like a huge tent, with animal-skin representations like gray-blue scars, that looked as if they had been laid on the walls with a palette knife.

The Matriarch, M'Cwvie, was short, white-haired, fifty-ish, and dressed like a Gipsy queen. With her rainbow of voluminous skirts she looked like an inverted punch bowl set atop a cushion.

Accepting my obeisances, she regarded me as an owl might a rabbit. The lids of those black, black eyes jumped upwards as she discovered my perfect accent. —The tape recorder Betty had carried on her interviews had done its part, and I knew the language reports from the first two expeditions, verbatim. I'm all hell when it comes to picking up accents.

"You are the poet?"

"Yes," I replied.

"Recite one of your poems, please."

"I'm sorry, but nothing short of a thorough translating job would do justice to your language and my poetry, and I don't know enough of your language yet."

"Oh?"

"But I've been making such translations for my own amusement, as an exercise in grammar," I continued. "I'd be honored to bring a few of them along one of the times that I come here."

"Yes. Do so."

Score one for me!

She turned to Betty.

"You may go now."

Betty muttered the parting formalities, gave me a strange sidewise look, and was gone. She apparently had expected to stay and "assist" me. She wanted a piece of the glory, like everyone else. But I was the Schliemann at this Troy, and there would be only one name on the Association report!

M'Cwyie rose, and I noticed that she gained very little height by standing. But then I'm six-six and look like a poplar in October: thin, bright red on top, and towering above everyone else.

"Our records are very, very old," she began. "Betty says that your word for their age is 'millennia'."

I nodded appreciatively.

"I'm very eager to see them."

"They are not here. We will have to go into the Temple—they may not be removed."

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I was suddenly wary.

"You have no objections to my copying them, do you?"

"No. I see that you respect them, or your desire would not be so great."

"Excellent."

She seemed amused. I asked her what was funny.

"The High Tongue may not be so easy for a foreigner to learn."

It came through fast.

No one on the first expedition had gotten this close. I had had no way of knowing that this was a double-language deal—a classical as well as a vulgar. I knew some of their Prakrit, now I had to learn all their Sanskrit.

"Ouch! and damn!"

"Pardon, please?"

"I'ts non-translatable, M'Cwyie. But imagine yourself having to learn the High Tongue in a hurry, and you can guess at the sentiment."

She seemed amused again, and told me to remove my shoes.

She guided me through an alcove . . .

. . . and into a burst of Byzantine brilliance!

No Earthman had ever been in this room before, or I would have heard about it. Carter, the first expedition's linguist, with the help of one Mary Allen, M.D., had learned all the grammar and vocabulary that I knew while sitting cross-legged in the ante-chamber.

We had had no idea this existed. Greedily, I cast my eyes about. A highly sophisticated system of esthetics lay behind the décor. We would have to revise our entire estimation of Martian culture.

For one thing, the ceiling was vaulted and corbelled; for another, there were side-columns with reverse flutings; for another—oh hell! The place was big. Posh. You could never have guessed it from the shaggy outsides.

I bent forward to study the gilt filigree on a ceremonial table. M'Cwyie seemed a-bit smug at my intentness, but I'd still have hated to play poker with her.

The table was loaded with books.

With my toe, I traced a mosaic on the floor.

"Is your entire city within this one building?"

"Yes, it goes far back into the mountain."

"I see," I said, seeing nothing.

I couldn't ask her for a conducted tour, yet.

She moved to a small stool by the table.

"Shall we begin your friendship with the High Tongue?"

I was trying to photograph the hall with my eyes, knowing I would have to get a camera in here, somehow, sooner or later. I tore my gaze from a statuette and nodded, hard.

"Yes, introduce me."

I sat down.

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For the next three weeks alphabet-bugs chased each other behind my eyelids whenever I tried to sleep. The sky was an unclouded pool of turquoise that rippled calligraphies whenever I swept my eyes across it. I drank quarts of coffee while I worked and mixed cocktails of Benzedrine and champagne for my coffee breaks.

M'Cwyie tutored me two hours every morning, and occasionally for another two in the evening. I spent an additional fourteen hours a day on my own, once I had gotten up sufficient momentum to go ahead alone.

And at night the elevator of time dropped me to its bottom floors . . .

I was six again, learning my Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Aramaic. I was ten, sneaking peeks at the *Iliad*. When Daddy wasn't spreading hellfire, brimstone, and brotherly love, he was teaching me to dig the Word, like in the original.

Lord! There are so many originals and so *many* words! When I was twelve I started pointing out the little differences between what he was preaching and what I was reading.

The fundamentalist vigor of his reply brooked no debate. It was worse than any beating. I kept my mouth shut after that and learned to appreciate Old Testament poetry.

—Lord, I am sorry! Daddy—Sir—I am sorry! —It couldn't be! It couldn't be . . .

On the day the boy graduated from high school, with the French, German, Spanish, and Latin awards, Dad Gallinger had told his fourteen-year old, six-foot scarecrow of a son that he wanted him to enter the ministry. I remember how his son was evasive:

"Sir," he had said, "I'd sort of like to study on my own for a year or so, and then take pre-theology courses at some liberal arts university. I feel I'm still sort of young to try a seminary, straight off."

The Voice of God: "But you have the gift of tongues, my son. You can preach the Gospel in all the lands of Babel. You were born to be a missionary. You say you are young, but time is rushing by you like a whirlwind. Start early, and you will enjoy added years of service."

The added years of service were so many added tails to the cat repeatedly laid on my back. I can't see his face now, I never can. Maybe it is because I was always afraid to look at it then.

And years later, when he was dead, and laid out, in black, amidst bouquets, amidst weeping congregationalists, amidst prayers, red faces, handkerchiefs, hands patting your shoulders, solemn-faced comforters . . . I looked at him and did not recognize him.

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We had met nine months before my birth, this stranger and I. He had never been cruel—stern, demanding, with contempt for everyone's shortcomings—but never cruel. He was also all that I had had of a mother. And brothers. And sisters. He had tolerated my three years at St. John's, possibly because of its name, never knowing how liberal and delightful a place it really was.

But I never knew him, and the man atop the catafalque demanded nothing now; I was free not to preach the Word.

But now I wanted to, in a different way. I wanted to preach a word that I could never have voiced while he lived.

I did not return for my Senior year in the fall. I had a small inheritance coming, and a bit of trouble getting control of it, since I was still under 18. But I managed.

It was Greenwich Village I finally settled upon.

Not telling any well-meaning parishoners my new address, I entered into a daily routine of writing poetry and teaching myself Japanese and Hindustani. I grew a fiery beard, drank espresso, and learned to play chess. I wanted to try a couple of the other paths to salvation.

After that, it was two years in India with the Old Peace Corps—which broke me of my Buddhism, and gave me my *Pipes of Krishna* lyrics and the Pulitzer they deserved.

Then back to the States for my degree, grad work in linguistics, and more prizes.

Then one day a ship went to Mars. The vessel settling in its New Mexico nest of fires contained a new language. —It was fantastic, exotic, and esthetically overpowering. After I had learned all there was to know about it, and written my book, I was famous in new circles:

"Go, Gallinger. Dip your bucket in the well, and bring us a drink of Mars. Go, learn another world —but remain aloof, rail at it gently like Auden—and hand us its soul in iambics."

And I came to the land where the sun is a tarnished penny, where the wind is a whip, where two moons play at hotrod games, and a hell of sand gives you the incendiary itches whenever you look at it.

I rose from my twistings on the bunk and crossed the darkened cabin to a port. The desert was a carpet of endless orange, bulging from the sweepings of centuries beneath it.

"I a stranger, unafraid— This is the land— I've got it made!"

I laughed.

I had the High Tongue by the tail already—or the roots, if you want your puns anatomical, as well as correct.

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The High and Low Tongues were not so dissimilar as they had first seemed. I had enough of the one to get me through the murkier parts of the other. I had the grammar and all the commoner irregular verbs down cold; the dictionary I was constructing grew by the day, like a tulip, and would bloom shortly. Every time I played the tapes the stem lengthened.

Now was the time to tax my ingenuity, to really drive the lessons home. I had purposely refrained from plunging into the major texts until I could do justice to them. I had been reading minor commentaries, bits of verse, fragments of history. And one thing had impressed me strongly in all that I read.

They wrote about concrete things: rocks, sand, water, winds; and the tenor couched within these elemental symbols was fiercely pessimistic. It reminded me of some Buddhist texts, but even more so, I realized from my recent *recherches*, it was like parts of the Old Testament. Specifically, it reminded me of the Book of Ecclesiastes.

That, then, would be it. The sentiment, as well as the vocabulary, was so similar that it would be a perfect exercise. Like putting Poe into French. I would never be a convert to the Way of Malann, but I would show them that an Earthman had once thought the same thoughts, felt similarly.

I switched on my desk lamp and sought King James amidst my books.

Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man . . .

My progress seemed to startle M'Cwyie. She peered at me, like Sartre's Other, across the tabletop. I ran through a chapter in the Book of Locar. I didn't look up, but I could feel the tight net her eyes were working about my head, shoulders, and rapid hands. I turned another page.

Was she weighing the net, judging the size of the catch? And what for? The books said nothing of fishers on Mars. Especially of men. They said that some god named Malann had spat, or had done something disgusting (depending on the version you read), and that life had gotten underway as a disease in inorganic matter. They said that movement was its first law, its first law, and that the dance was the only legitimate reply to the inorganic . . . the dance's quality its justification, —fication . . . and love is a disease in organic matter—Inorganic matter?

I shook my head. I had almost been asleep.

"M'narra."

I stood and stretched. Her eyes outlined me greedily now. So I met them, and they dropped.

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"I grow tired. I want to rest awhile. I didn't sleep much last night."

She nodded, Earth's shorthand for "yes", as she had learned from me.

"You wish to relax, and see the explicitness of the doctrine of Locar in its fullness?"

"Pardon me?"

"You wish to see a Dance of Locar?"

"Oh." Their damned circuits of form and periphrasis here ran worse than the Korean! "Yes. Surely. Any time it's going to be done I'd be happy to watch."

I continued, "In the meantime, I've been meaning to ask you whether I might take some pictures—"

"Now is the time. Sit down. Rest. I will call the musicians."

She bustled out through a door I had never been past.

Well now, the dance was the highest art, according to Locar, not to mention Havelock Ellis, and I was about to see how their centuries-dead philosopher felt it should be conducted. I rubbed my eyes and snapped over, touching my toes a few times.

The blood began pounding in my head, and I sucked in a couple deep breaths. I bent again and there was a flurry of motion at the door.

To the trio who entered with M'Cwyie I must have looked as if I were searching for the marbles I had just lost, bent over like that.

I grinned weakly and straightened up, my face red from more than exertion. I hadn't expected them *that* quickly.

Suddenly I thought of Havelock Ellis again in his area of greatest popularity.

The little redheaded doll, wearing, sari-like, a diaphanous piece of the Martian sky, looked up in wonder—as a child at some colorful flag on a high pole.

"Hello," I said, or its equivalent.

She bowed before replying. Evidently I had been promoted in status.

"I shall dance," said the red wound in that pale, pale cameo, her face. Eyes, the color of dream and her dress, pulled away from mine.

She drifted to the center of the room.

Standing there, like a figure in an Etruscan frieze, she was either meditating or regarding the design on the floor.

Was the mosaic symbolic of something? I studied it. If it was, it eluded me; it would make an attractive bathroom floor or patio, but I couldn't see much in it beyond that.

The other two were paint-spattered sparrows like M'Cwyie, in their middle years. One settled to the floor with a triple-stringed instrument faintly resembling a *samisen*. The other held a simple

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woodblock and two drumsticks.

M'Cwyie disdained her stool and was seated upon the floor before I realized it. I followed suit.

The *samisen* player was still tuning up, so I leaned toward M'Cwyie.

"What is the dancer's name?"

"Braxa," she replied, without looking at me, and raised her left hand, slowly, which meant yes, and go ahead, and let it begin.

The stringed-thing throbbed like a toothache, and a tick-tocking, like ghosts of all the clocks they had never invented, sprang from the block.

Braxa was a statue, both hands raised to her face, elbows high and outspread.

The music became a metaphor for fire.

Crackle, purr, snap . . .

She did not move.

The hissing altered to splashes. The cadence slowed. It was water now, the most precious thing in the world, gurgling clear then green over mossy rocks.

Still she did not move.

Glissandos. A pause.

Then, so faint I could hardly be sure at first, the tremble of the winds began. Softly, gently, sighing and halting, uncertain. A pause, a sob, then a repetition of the first statement, only louder.

Were my eyes completely bugged from my reading, or was Braxa actually trembling, all over, head to foot.

She was.

She began a microscopic swaying. A fraction of an inch right, then left. Her fingers opened like the petals of a flower, and I could see that her eyes were closed.

Her eyes opened. They were distant, glassy, looking through me and the walls. Her swaying became more pronounced, merged with the beat.

The wind was sweeping in from the desert now, falling against Tirellian like waves on a dike. Her fingers moved, they were the gusts. Her arms, slow pendulums, descended, began a counter-movement.

The gale was coming now. She began an axial movement and her hands caught up with the rest of her body, only now her shoulders commenced to writhe out a figure-eight.

The wind! The wind, I say! O wild, enigmatic! O muse of St.-John Perse!

The cyclone was twisting round those eyes, its still center. Her head was thrown back, but I knew there was no ceiling between her gaze, passive as Buddha's, and the unchanging skies. Only the two moons, perhaps, interrupted their slumber in that elemental Nirvana of uninhabited turquoise.

Years ago, I had seen the Devadasis in India, the street-dancers, spinning their colorful webs, drawing in the male insect. But Braxa was more than this: she

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was a Ramadjany, like those votaries of Rama, incarnation of Vishnu, who had given the dance to man: the sacred dancers.

The clicking was monotonously steady now; the whine of the strings made me think of the stinging rays of the sun, their heat stolen by the wind's halations; the blue was Sarasvati and Mary, and a girl named Laura. I heard a sitàr from somewhere, watched this statue come to life, and inhaled a divine afflatus.

I was again Rimbaud with his hashish, Baudelaire with his laudanum, Poe, De Quincy, Wilde, Mallarme, and Aleister Crowley. I was, for a fleeting second, my father in his dark pulpit and darker suit, the hymns and the organ's wheeze transmuted to bright wind.

She was a spun weather vane, a feathered crucifix hovering in the air, a clothes-line holding one bright garment lashed parallel to the ground. Her shoulder was bare now, and her right breast moved up and down like a moon in the sky, its red nipple appearing momently above a fold and vanishing again. The music was as formal as Job's argument with God. Her dance was God's reply.

The music slowed, settled; it had been met, matched, answered. Her garment, as if alive, crept back into the more sedate folds it originally held.

She dropped low, lower, to the floor. Her head fell upon her raised knees. She did not move.

There was silence.

I realized, from the ache across my shoulders, how tensely I had been sitting. My armpits were wet. Rivulets had been running down my sides. What did one do now? Applaud?

I sought M'Cwyie from the corner of my eye. She raised her right hand.

As if by telepathy the girl shuddered all over and stood. The musicians also rose. So did M'Cwyie.

I got to my feet, with a Charley Horse in my left leg, and said, "It was beautiful," inane as that sounds.

I received three different High Forms of "thank you."

There was a flurry of color and I was alone again with M'Cwyie.

"That is the one hundred-seventeenth of the two thousand, two hundred-twenty-four dances of Locar."

I looked down at her.

"Whether Locar was right or wrong, he worked out a fine reply to the inorganic."

She smiled.

"Are the dances of your world like this?"

"Some of them are similar. I was reminded of them as I watched Braxa—but I've never seen anything exactly like hers."

"She is good," M'Cwyie said, "She knows all the dances."

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A hint of her earlier expression which had troubled me . . .

It was gone in an instant.

"I must tend my duties now." She moved to the table and closed the books. "M'narra."

"Good-bye." I slipped into my boots.

"Good-bye, Gallinger."

I walked out the door, mounted the jeepster, and roared across the evening into night, my wings of risen desert flapping slowly behind me.

II.

I had just closed the door behind Betty, after a brief grammar session, when I heard the voices in the hall. My vent was opened a fraction, so I stood there and eavesdropped:

Morton's fruity treble: "Guess what? He said 'hello' to me a while ago."

"Hmmph!" Emory's elephant lungs exploded. "Either he's slipping, or you were standing in his way and he wanted you to move."

"Probably didn't recognize me. I don't think he sleeps any more, now he has that language to play with. I had night watch last week, and every night I passed his door at 0300—I always heard that recorder going. At 0500, when I got off, he was still at it."

"The guy *is* working hard," Emory admitted, grudgingly. "In fact, I think he's taking some kind of dope to keep awake. He looks sort of glassy-eyed these days. Maybe that's natural for a poet, though."

Betty had been standing there, because she broke in then:

"Regardless of what you think of him, it's going to take me at least a year to learn what he's picked up in three weeks. And I'm just a linguist, not a poet."

Morton must have been nursing a crush on her bovine charms. It's the only reason I can think of for his dropping his guns to say what he did.

"I took a course in modern poetry when I was back at the university," he began. "We read six authors—Yeats, Pound, Eliot, Crane, Stevens, and Gallinger—and on the last day of the semester, when the prof was feeling a little rhetorical, he said, 'These six names are written on the century, and all the gates of criticism and Hell shall not prevail against them.' "

"Myself," he continued, "I thought his *Pipes of Krishna* and his *Madrigals* were great. I was honored to be chosen for an expedition he was going on.

"I think he's spoken two dozen words to me since I met him," he finished.

The Defense: "Did it ever occur to you," Betty said, "that he might be tremendously self-conscious about his appearance? He was also a precocious child, and probably never even had school friends.

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He's sensitive and very introverted."

"Sensitive? Self-conscious?" Emory choked and gagged. "The man is as proud as Lucifer, and he's a walking insult machine. You press a button like 'Hello' or 'Nice day' and he thumbs his nose at you. He's got it down to a reflex."

They muttered a few other pleasantries and drifted away.

Well bless you, Morton boy. You little pimple-faced, Ivy-bred connoisseur! I've never taken a course in my poetry, but I'm glad someone said that. The Gates of Hell. Well now! Maybe Daddy's prayers got heard somewhere, and I am a missionary, after all!

Only . . .

. . . Only a missionary needs something to convert people *to*. I have my private system of esthetics, and I suppose it oozes an ethical by-product somewhere. But if I ever had anything to preach, really, even in my poems, I wouldn't care to preach it to such lowlifes as you. If you think I'm a slob, I'm also a snob, and there's no room for you in my Heaven—it's a private place, where Swift, Shaw, and Petronius Arbiter come to dinner.

And oh, the feasts we have! The Trimalchio's, the Emory's we dissect!

We finish you with the soup, Morton!

I turned and settled at my desk. I wanted to write something. Ecclesiastes could take a night off. I wanted to write a poem, a poem about the one hundred-seventeenth dance of Locar; about a rose following the light, traced by the wind, sick, like Blake's rose, dying . . .

I found a pencil and began.

When I had finished I was pleased. It wasn't great—at least, it was no greater than it needed to be—High Martian not being my strongest tongue. I groped, and put it into English, with partial rhymes. Maybe I'd stick it in my next book. I called it *Braxa*:

In a land of wind and red,
where the icy evening of Time
freezes milk in the breasts of Life,
as two moons overhead—
cat and dog in alleyways of dream
—
scratch and scramble agelessly my flight . . .

This final flower turns a burning head.

I put it away and found some phenobarbitol. I was suddenly tired.

When I showed my poem to M'Cwyie the next day, she read it through several times, very slowly.

"It is lovely," she said. "But you used three words from your own language. 'Cat' and 'dog', I assume, are two small animals

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with a hereditary hatred for one another. But what is 'flower'?"

"Oh," I said. "I've never come across your word for 'flower', but I was actually thinking of an Earth-flower, the rose."

"What is it like?"

"Well, its petals are generally bright red. That's what I meant, on one level, by 'burning head'. I also wanted it to imply fever, though, and red hair, and the fire of life. The rose, itself, has a thorny stem, green leaves, and a distinct, pleasant aroma."

"I wish I could see one."

"I suppose it could be arranged. I'll check."

"Do it, please. You are a—" She used the word for "prophet", or religious poet, like Isaiah or Locar. "—and your poem is inspired. I shall tell Braxa of it."

I declined the nomination, but felt flattered.

This, then, I decided, was the strategic day, the day on which to ask whether I might bring in the microfilm machine and the camera. I wanted to copy all their texts, I explained, and I couldn't write fast enough to do it.

She surprised me by agreeing immediately. But she bowled me over with her invitation.

"Would you like to come and stay here while you do this thing? Then you can work night and day, any time you want—except when the Temple is being used, of course."

I bowed.

"I should be honored."

"Good. Bring your machines when you want, and I will show you a room."

"Will this afternoon be all right?"

"Certainly."

"Then I will go now and get things ready. Until this afternoon . . ."

"Good-bye."

I anticipated a little trouble from Emory, but not much. Everyone back at the ship was anxious to see the Martians, talk with the Martians, poke needles in the Martians, ask them about Martian climate, diseases, soil chemistry, politics, and mushrooms (our botanist was a fungus nut, but a reasonably good guy)—and only four or five had actually gotten to see them. The crew had been spending most of its time excavating dead cities and their acropolises. We played the game by strict rules, and the natives were as fiercely insular as the nineteenth-century Japanese. I figured I would meet with little resistance, and I figured right.

In fact, I got the distinct impression that everyone was happy to see me move out.

I stopped in the hydroponics room to speak with our mushroom-master.

"Hi, Kane. Grow any toadstools in the sand yet?"

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He sniffed. He always sniffs. Maybe he's allergic to plants.

"Hello, Gallinger. No, I haven't had any success with toadstools, but look behind the car barn next time you're out there. I've got a few cacti going."

"Great," I observed. Doc Kane was about my only friend aboard, not counting Betty.

"Say, I came down to ask you a favor."

"Name it."

"I want a rose."

"A what?"

"A rose. You know, a nice red America Beauty job—thorns, pretty smelling—"

"I don't think it will take in this soil. *Sniff, sniff.*"

"No, you don't understand. I don't want to plant it, I just want the flowers."

"I'd have to use the tanks." He scratched his hairless dome. "It would take at least three months to get you flowers, even under forced growth."

"Will you do it?"

"Sure, if you don't mind the wait."

"Not at all. In fact, three months will just make it before we leave." I looked about at the pools of crawling slime, at the trays of shoots. "—I'm moving up to Tirellian today, but I'll be in and out all the time. I'll be here when it blooms."

"Moving up there, eh? Moore said they're an in-group."

"I guess I'm 'in' then."

"Looks that way—I still don't see how you learned their language, though. Of course, I had trouble with French and German for my Ph.D, but last week I heard Betty demonstrate it at lunch. It just sounds like a lot of weird noises. She says speaking it is like working a *Times* crossword and trying to imitate birdcalls at the same time."

I laughed, and took the cigarette he offered me.

"It's complicated," I acknowledged. "But, well, it's as if you suddenly came across a whole new class of mycetae here—you'd dream about it at night."

His eyes were gleaming.

"Wouldn't that be something! I might, yet, you know."

"Maybe you will."

He chuckled as we walked to the door.

"I'll start your roses tonight. Take it easy down there."

"You bet. Thanks."

Like I said, a fungus nut, but a fairly good guy.

My quarters in the Citadel of Tirellian were directly adjacent to the Temple, on the inward side and slightly to the left. They were a considerable improvement over my cramped cabin, and I was pleased that Martian culture had progressed sufficiently to discover the desirability of the mattress over the pallet. Also, the bed was long

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enough to accommodate me, which *was* surprising.

So I unpacked and took 16 35 mm. shots of the Temple, before starting on the books.

I took 'stats until I was sick of turning pages without knowing what they said. So I started translating a work of history.

"Lo. In the thirty-seventh year of the Process of Cillen the rains came, which gave rise to rejoicing, for it was a rare and untoward occurrence, and commonly construed a blessing.

"But it was not the life-giving semen of Malann which fell from the heavens. It was the blood of the universe, spurting from an artery. And the last days were upon us. The final dance was to begin.

"The rains brought the plague that does not kill, and the last passes of Locar began with their drumming . . ."

I asked myself what the hell Tamur meant, for he was an historian and supposedly committed to fact. This was not their Apocalypse.

Unless they could be one and the same . . .?

Why not? I mused. Tirellian's handful of people were the remnant of what had obviously once been a highly developed culture. They had had wars, but no holocausts; science, but little technology. A plague, a plague that did not kill . . .? Could that have done it? How, if it wasn't fatal?

I read on, but the nature of the plague was not discussed. I turned pages, skipped ahead, and drew a blank.

M'Cwyie! M'Cwyie! When I want to question you most, you are not around!

Would it be a *faux pas* to go looking for her? Yes, I decided. I was restricted to the rooms I had been shown, that had been an implicit understanding. I would have to wait to find out.

So I cursed long and loud, in many languages, doubtless burning Malann's sacred ears, there in his Temple.

He did not see fit to strike me dead, so I decided to call it a day and hit the sack.

I must have been asleep for several hours when Braxa entered my room with a tiny lamp. She dragged me awake by tugging at my pajama sleeve.

I said hello. Thinking back, there is not much else I could have said.

"Hello."

"I have come," she said, "to hear the poem."

"What poem?"

"Yours."

"Oh."

I yawned, sat up, and did things people usually do when awakened in the middle of the night to read poetry.

"That is very kind of you, but isn't the hour a trifle awkward?"

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"I don't mind," she said.

Someday I am going to write an article for the *Journal of Semantics,* called "Tone of Voice: An Insufficient Vehicle for Irony."

However, I was awake, so I grabbed my robe.

"What sort of animal is that?" she asked, pointing at the silk dragon on my lapel.

"Mythical," I replied. "Now look, it's late. I am tired. I have much to do in the morning. And M'Cwyie just might get the wrong idea if she learns you were here."

"Wrong idea?"

"You know damned well what I mean!" It was the first time I had had an opportunity to use Martian profanity, and it failed.

"No," she said, "I do not know."

She seemed frightened, like a puppy being scolded without knowing what it has done wrong.

I softened. Her red cloak matched her hair and lips so perfectly, and those lips were trembling.

"Here now, I didn't mean to upset you. On my world there are certain uh, mores, concerning people of different sex alone together in bedrooms, and not allied by marriage . . . Um, I mean, you see what I mean?"

"No."

They were jade, her eyes.

"Well, it's sort of . . . Well, it's sex, that's what it is."

A light was switched on in those jade lamps.

"Oh, you mean having children!"

"Yes. That's it! Exactly."

She laughed. It was the first time I had heard laughter in Tirellian. It sounded like a violinist striking his high strings with the bow, in short little chops. It was not an altogether pleasant thing to hear, especially because she laughed too long.

When she had finished she moved closer.

"I remember, now," she said. "We used to have such rules. Half a Process ago, when I was a child, we had such rules. But," she looked as if she were ready to laugh again, "there is no need for them now."

My mind moved like a tape recorder played at triple speed.

Half a Process! HalfaProcessa-ProcessaProcess! No! Yes!

Half a Process was two hundred-forty-three years, roughly speaking!

—Time enough to learn the 2224 dances of Locar.

—Time enough to grow old, if you were human.

—Earth-style human, I mean.

I looked at her again, pale as the white queen in an ivory chess set.

She was human, I'd stake my soul—alive, normal, healthy, I'd stake my life—woman, my body . . .

But she was two and a half centuries old, which made M'Cwyie Methusala's grandma. It flattered

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me to think of their repeated complimenting of my skills, as linguist, as poet. These superior beings!

But what did she mean 'there is no such need for them now'? Why the near-hysteria? Why all those funny looks I'd been getting from M'Cwyie?

I suddenly knew I was close to something important, besides a beautiful girl.

"Tell me," I said, in my Casual Voice, "did it have anything to do with 'the plague that does not kill,' of which Tamur wrote?"

"Yes," she replied, "the children born after the Rains could have no children of their own, and—"

"And what?" I was leaning forward, memory set at "record".

"—and the men had no desire to get any."

I sagged backward against the bedpost. Racial sterility, masculine impotence, following phenomenal weather. Had some vagabond cloud of radioactive junk from God knows where penetrated their weak atmosphere one day? One day long before Shiaparelli saw the canals, mythical as my dragon, before those "canals" had given rise to some correct guesses for all the wrong reasons, had Braxa been alive, dancing, here—damned in the womb since blind Milton had written of another paradise, equally lost?

I found a cigarette. Good thing I had thought to bring ashtrays. Mars had never had a tobacco industry either. Or booze. The ascetics I had met in India had been Dionysiac compared to this.

"What is that tube of fire?"

"A cigarette. Want one?"

"Yes, please."

She sat beside me, and I lighted it for her.

"It irritates the nose."

"Yes. Draw some into your lungs, hold it there, and exhale."

A moment passed.

"Ooh," she said.

A pause, then, "Is it sacred?"

"No, it's nicotine," I answered, "a very *ersatz* form of divinity."

Another pause.

"Please don't ask me to translate 'ersatz'."

"I won't. I get this feeling sometimes when I dance."

"It will pass in a moment."

"Tell me your poem now."

An idea hit me.

"Wait a minute," I said, "I may have something better."

I got up and rummaged through my notebooks, then I returned and sat beside her.

"These are the first three chapters of the Book of Eccelsiastes," I explained. "It is very similar to your own sacred books."

I started reading.

I got through eleven verses before she cried out, "Please don't read that! Tell me one of yours!"

I stopped and tossed the notebook onto a nearby table. She was shaking, not as she had quivered

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that day she danced as the wind, but with the jitter of unshed tears. She held her cigarette awkwardly, like a pencil. Clumsily, I put my arm about her shoulders.

"He is so sad," she said, "like all the others."

So I twisted my mind like a bright ribbon, folded it, and tied the crazy Christmas knots I love so well. From German to Martian, with love, I did an impromptu paraphrasal of a poem about a Spanish dancer. I thought it would please her. I was right.

"Ooh," she said again. "Did you write that?"

"No, it's by a better man than I."

"I don't believe you. You wrote it."

"No, a man named Rilke did."

"But you brought it across to my language.—Light another match, so I can see how she danced."

I did.

"'The fires of forever'," she mused, "and she stamped them out, 'with small, firm feet'. I wish I could dance like that."

"You're better than any Gipsy," I laughed, blowing it out.

"No, I'm not. I couldn't do that."

Her cigarette was burning down, so I removed it from her fingers and put it out, along with my own.

"Do you want me to dance for you?"

"No," I said. "Go to bed."

She smiled, and before I realized it, had unclasped the fold of red at her shoulder.

And everything fell away.

And I swallowed, with some difficulty.

"All right," she said.

So I kissed her, as the breath of fallen cloth extinguished the lamp.

III.

The days were like Shelley's leaves: yellow, red, brown, whipped in bright gusts by the west wind. They swirled past me with the rattle of microfilm. Almost all the books were recorded now. It would take scholars years to get through them, to properly assess their value. Mars was locked in my desk.

Ecclesiastes, abandoned and returned to a dozen times, was almost ready to speak in the High Tongue.

I whistled when I wasn't in the Temple. I wrote reams of poetry I would have been ashamed of before. Evenings I would walk with Braxa, across the dunes or up into the mountains. Sometimes she would dance for me; and I would read something long, and in dactylic hexameter. She still thought I was Rilke, and I almost kidded myself into believing it. Here I was, staying at the Castle Duino, writing his *Elegies*.

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. . . It is strange to inhabit the Earth no more,
to use no longer customs scarce acquired,
nor interpret roses . . .

No! Never interpret roses! Don't. Smell them (sniff, Kane!), pick them, enjoy them. Live in the moment. Hold to it tightly. But charge not the gods to explain. So fast the leaves go by, are blown . . .

And no one ever noticed us. Or cared.

Laura. Laura and Braxa. They rhyme, you know, with a bit of a clash. Tall, cool, and blonde was she (I hate blondes!), and Daddy had turned me inside out, like a pocket, and I thought she could fill me again. But the big, beat word-slinger, with Judas-beard and dog-trust in his eyes, oh, he had been a fine decoration at her parties. And that was all.

How the machine cursed me in the Temple! It blasphemed Malann and Gallinger. And the wild west wind went by and something was not far behind.

The last days were upon us.

A day went by and I did not see Braxa, and a night.

And a second. A third.

I was half-mad. I hadn't realized how close we had become, how important she had been. With the dumb assurance of presence, I had fought against questioning roses.

I had to ask. I didn't want to, but I had no choice.

"Where is she, M'Cwyie? Where is Braxa?"

"She is gone," she said.

"Where?"

"I do not know."

I looked at those devil-bird eyes. Anathema maranatha rose to my lips.

"I must know."

She looked through me.

"She has left us. She is gone. Up into the hills, I suppose. Or the desert. It does not matter. What does anything matter? The dance draws to a close. The Temple will soon be empty."

"Why? Why did she leave?"

"I do not know."

"I must see her again. We lift off in a matter of days."

"I am sorry, Gallinger."

"So am I," I said, and slammed shut a book without saying "m'narra".

I stood up.

"I will find her."

I left the Temple. M'Cwyie was a seated statue. My boots were still where I had left them.

All day I roared up and down the dunes, going nowhere. To the crew of the *Aspic* I must have looked like a sandstorm, all by myself. Finally, I had to return for more fuel.

Emory came stalking out.

"Okay, make it good. You look like the abominable dust man.

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Why the rodeo?"

"Why, I, uh, lost something."

"In the middle of the desert? Was it one of your sonnets? They're the only thing I can think of that you'd make such a fuss over."

"No, dammit! It was something personal."

George had finished filling the tank. I started to mount the jeepster again.

"Hold on there!" He grabbed my arm.

"You're not going back until you tell me what this is all about."

I could have broken his grip, but then he could order me dragged back by the heels, and quite a few people would enjoy doing the dragging. So I forced myself to speak slowly, softly:

"It's simply that I lost my watch. My mother gave it to me and it's a family heirloom. I want to find it before we leave."

"You sure it's not in your cabin, or down in Tirellian?"

"I've already checked."

"Maybe somebody hid it to irritate you. You know you're not the most popular guy around."

I shook my head.

"I thought of that. But I always carry it in my right pocket. I think it might have bounced out going over the dunes."

He narrowed his eyes.

"I remember reading on a book jacket that your mother died when you were born."

"That's right," I said, biting my tongue. "The watch belonged to her father and she wanted me to have it. My father kept it for me."

"Hmph!" he snorted. "That's a pretty strange way to look for a watch, riding up and down in a jeepster."

"I could see the light shining off it that way," I offered, lamely.

"Well, it's starting to get dark," he observed. "No sense looking any more today.

"Throw a dust sheet over the jeepster," he directed a mechanic.

He patted my arm.

"Come on in and get a shower, and something to eat. You look as if you could use both."

Little fatty flecks beneath pale eyes, thinning hair, and an Irish nose; a voice a decibel louder than anyone else's . . .

His only qualifications for leadership!

I stood there, hating him. Claudius! If only this were the fifth act!

But suddenly the idea of a shower, and food, came through to me. I could use both badly. If I insisted on hurrying back immediately I might arouse more suspicion.

So I brushed some sand from my sleeve.

"You're right. That sounds like a good idea."

"Come on, we'll eat in my cabin."

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The shower was a blessing, clean khakis were the grace of God, and the food smelled like Heaven.

"Smells pretty good," I said.

We hacked up our steaks in silence. When we got to the dessert and coffee he suggested:

"Why don't you take the night off? Stay here and get some sleep."

I shook my head.

"I'm pretty busy. Finishing up. There's not much time left."

"A couple days ago you said you were almost finished."

"Almost, but not quite."

"You also said they'll be holding a service in the Temple tonight."

"That's right. I'm going to work in my room."

He shrugged his shoulders.

Finally, he said, "Gallinger," and I looked up because my name means trouble.

"It shouldn't be any of my business," he said, "but it is. Betty says you have a girl down there."

There was no question mark. It was a statement hanging in the air. Waiting.

—Betty, you're a bitch. You're a cow and a bitch. And a jealous one, at that. Why didn't you keep your nose where it belonged, shut your eyes? Your mouth?

"So?" I said, a statement with a question mark.

"So," he answered it, "it is my duty, as head of this expedition, to see that relations with the natives are carried on in a friendly, and diplomatic, manner."

"You speak of them," I said, "as though they are aborigines. Nothing could be further from the truth."

I rose.

"When my papers are published everyone on Earth will know that truth. I'll tell them things Doctor Moore never even guessed at. I'll tell the tragedy of a doomed race, waiting for death, resigned and disinterested. I'll tell why, and it will break hard, scholarly hearts. I'll write about it, and they will give me more prizes, and this time I won't want them.

"My God!" I exclaimed. "They had a culture when our ancestors were clubbing the sabre-tooth and finding out how fire works!"

"*Do* you have a girl down there?"

"Yes!" I said. *Yes, Claudius! Yes, Daddy! Yes, Emory!* "I do. But I'm going to let you in on a scholarly scoop now. They're already dead. They're sterile. In one more generation there won't be any Martians."

I paused, then added, "Except in my papers, except on a few pieces of microfilm and tape. And in some poems, about a girl who did give a damn and could only bitch about the unfairness of it all by dancing."

"Oh," he said.

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After awhile:

"You *have* been behaving differently these past couple months. You've even been downright civil on occasion, you know. I couldn't help wondering what was happening. I didn't know anything mattered that strongly to you."

I bowed my head.

"Is she the reason you were racing around the desert?"

I nodded.

"Why?"

I looked up.

"Because she's out there, somewhere. I don't know where, or why. And I've got to find her before we go."

"Oh," he said again.

Then he leaned back, opened a drawer, and took out something wrapped in a towel. He unwound it. A framed photo of a woman lay on the table.

"My wife," he said.

It was an attractive face, with big, almond eyes.

"I'm a Navy man, you know," he began. "Young officer once. Met her in Japan.

"Where I come from it wasn't considered right to marry into another race, so we never did. But she was my wife. When she died I was on the other side of the world. They took my children, and I've never seen them since. I couldn't learn what orphanage, what home, they were put into. That was long ago. Very few people know about it."

"I'm sorry," I said.

"Don't be. Forget it. But," he shifted in his chair and looked at me, "if you do want to take her back with you—do it. It'll mean my neck, but I'm too old to ever head another expedition like this one. So go ahead."

He gulped his cold coffee.

"Get your jeepster."

He swivelled the chair around.

I tried to say "thank you" twice, but I couldn't. So I got up and walked out.

"Sayonara, and all that," he muttered behind me.

"Here it is, Gallinger!" I heard a shout.

I turned on my heel and looked back up the ramp.

"Kane!"

He was limned in the port, shadow against light, but I had heard him sniff.

I returned the few steps.

"Here what is?"

"Your rose."

He produced a plastic container, divided internally. The lower half was filled with liquid. The stem ran down into it. The other half, a glass of claret in this horrible night, was a large, newly-opened rose.

"Thank you," I said, tucking it into my jacket.

"Going back to Tirellian, eh?"

"Yes."

"I saw you come aboard, so I got it ready. Just missed you at the

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Captain's cabin. He was busy. Hollered out that I could catch you at the barns."

"Thanks again."

"It's chemically treated. It will stay in bloom for weeks."

I nodded. I was gone.

Up into the mountains now. Far. Far. The sky was a bucket of ice in which no moons floated. The going became steeper, and the little donkey protested. I whipped him with the throttle and went on. Up. Up. I spotted a green, unwinking star, and felt a lump in my throat. The encased rose beat against my chest like an extra heart. The donkey brayed, long and loudly, then began to cough. I lashed him some more and he died.

I threw the emergency brake on and got out. I began to walk.

So cold, so cold it grows. Up here. At night? Why? Why did she do it? Why flee the campfire when night comes on?

And I was up, down around, and through every chasm, gorge, and pass, with my long-legged strides and an ease of movement never known on Earth.

Barely two days remain, my love, and thou hast forsaken me. Why?

I crawled under overhangs. I leapt over ridges. I scraped my knees, an elbow. I heard my jacket tear.

No answer, Malann? Do you really hate your people this much? Then I'll try someone else. Vishnu, you're the Preserver. Preserve her, please! Let me find her.

Jehovah?

Adonis? Osiris? Thammuz? Manitou? Legba? Where is she?

I ranged far and high, and I slipped.

Stones ground underfoot and I dangled over an edge. My fingers so cold. It was hard to grip the rock.

I looked down.

Twelve feet or so. I let go and dropped, landed rolling.

Then I heard her scream.

I lay there, not moving, looking up. Against the night, above, she called.

"Gallinger!"

I lay still.

"Gallinger!"

And she was gone.

I heard stones rattle and knew she was coming down some path to the right of me.

I jumped up and ducked into the shadow of a boulder.

She rounded a cut-off, and picked her way, uncertainly, through the stones.

"Gallinger?"

I stepped out and seized her shoulders.

"Braxa."

She screamed again, then began to cry, crowding against me. It was the first time I had ever heard her cry.

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"Why?" I asked. "Why?"

But she only clung to me and sobbed.

Finally, "I thought you had killed yourself."

"Maybe I would have," I said. "Why did you leave Tirellian? And me?"

"Didn't M'Cwyie tell you? Didn't you guess?"

"I didn't guess, and M'Cwyie said she didn't know."

"Then she lied. She knows."

"What? What is it she knows?"

She shook all over, then was silent for a long time. I realized suddenly that she was wearing only her flimsy dancer's costume. I pushed her from me, took off my jacket, and put it about her shoulders.

"Great Malann!" I cried. "You'll freeze to death!"

"No," she said, "I won't."

I was transferring the rose-case to my pocket.

"What is that?" she asked.

"A rose," I answered. "You can't make it out much in the dark. I once compared you to one. Remember?"

"Yu-Yes. May I carry it?"

"Sure." I stuck it in the jacket pocket.

"Well? I'm still waiting for an explanation."

"You really do not know?" she asked.

"No!"

"When the Rains came," she said, "apparently only our men were affected, which was enough. . . . Because I—wasn't—affected—apparently—"

"Oh," I said. "Oh."

We stood there, and I thought.

"Well, why did you run? What's wrong with being pregnant on Mars? Tamur was mistaken. Your people can live again."

She laughed, again that wild violin played by a Paginini gone mad. I stopped her before it went too far.

"How?" she finally asked, rubbing her cheek.

"Your people live longer than ours. If our child is normal it will mean our races can intermarry. There must still be other fertile women of your race. Why not?"

"You have read the Book of Locar," she said, "and yet you ask me that? Death was decided, voted upon, and passed, shortly after it appeared in this form. But long before, the followers of Locar knew. They decided it long ago. 'We have done all things,' they said, 'we have seen all things, we have heard and felt all things. The dance was good. Now let it end.' "

"You can't believe that."

"What I believe does not matter," she replied. "M'Cwyie and the Mothers have decided we must die. Their very title is now a mockery, but their decisions will be upheld. There is only one prophecy left, and it is mistaken. We will die."

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"No," I said.

"What, then?"

"Come back with me, to Earth."

"No."

"All right, then. Come with me now."

"Where?"

"Back to Tirellian. I'm going to talk to the Mothers."

"You can't! There is a Ceremony tonight!"

I laughed.

"A ceremony for a god who knocks you down, and then kicks you in the teeth?"

"He is still Malann," she answered. "We are still his people."

"You and my father would have gotten along fine," I snarled. "But I am going, and you are coming with me, even if I have to carry you—and I'm bigger than you are."

"But you are not bigger than Ontro."

"Who the hell is Ontro?"

"He will stop you, Gallinger. He is the Fist of Malann."

IV.

I scudded the jeepster to a halt in front of the only entrance I knew, M'Cwyie's. Braxa, who had seen the rose in a headlamp, now cradled it in her lap, like our child, and said nothing. There was a passive, lovely look on her face.

"Are they in the Temple now?" I wanted to know.

The Madonna-expression did not change. I repeated the question. She stirred.

"Yes," she said, from a distance, "but you cannot go in."

"We'll see."

I circled and helped her down.

I led her by the hand, and she moved as if in a trance. In the light of the new-risen moon, her eyes looked as they had the day I met her, when she had danced. I snapped my fingers. Nothing happened.

So I pushed the door open and led her in. The room was half-lighted.

And she screamed for the third time that evening:

"Do not harm him, Ontro! It is Gallinger!"

I had never seen a Martian man before, only women. So I had no way of knowing whether he was a freak, though I suspected it strongly.

I looked up at him.

His half-naked body was covered with moles and swellings. Gland trouble, I guessed.

I had thought I was the tallest man on the planet, but he was seven feet tall and overweight. Now I knew where my giant bed had come from!

"Go back," he said. "She may enter. You may not."

"I must get my books and things."

He raised a huge left arm. I followed it. All my belongings

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lay neatly stacked in the corner.

"I must go in. I must talk with M'Cwyie and the Mothers."

"You may not."

"The lives of your people depend on it."

"Go back, he boomed. "Go home to *your* people, Gallinger. Leave *us!*"

My name sounded so different on his lips, like someone else's. How old was he? I wondered. Three hundred? Four? Had he been a Temple guardian all his life? Why? Who was there to guard against? I didn't like the way he moved. I had seen men who moved like that before.

"Go back," he repeated.

If they had refined their martial arts as far as they had their dances, or, worse yet, if their fighting arts were a part of the dance, I was in for trouble.

"Go on in," I said to Braxa. "Give the rose to M'Cwyie. Tell her that I sent it. Tell her I'll be there shortly."

"I will do as you ask. Remember me on Earth, Gallinger. Goodbye."

I did not answer her, and she walked past Ontro and into the next room, bearing her rose.

"Now will you leave?" he asked. "If you like, I will tell her that we fought and you almost beat me, but I knocked you unconscious and carried you back to your ship."

"No," I said, "either I go around you or go over you, but I am going through."

He dropped into a crouch, arms extended.

"It is a sin to lay hands on a holy man," he rumbled, "but I will stop you, Gallinger."

My memory was a fogged window, suddenly exposed to fresh air. Things cleared. I looked back six years.

I was a student of Oriental Languages at the University of Tokyo. It was my twice-weekly night of recreation. I stood in a 30-foot circle in the Kodokan, the *judogi* lashed about my high hips by a brown belt. I was *Ik-kyu,* one notch below the lowest degree of expert. A brown diamond above my right breast said 'Jiu-Jitsu' in Japanese, and it meant *atemi-waza,* really, because of the one striking-technique I had worked out, found unbelievably suitable to my size, and won matches with.

But I had never used it on a man, and it was five years since I had practiced. I was out of shape, I knew, but I tried hard to force my mind *tsuki no kokoro,* like the moon, reflecting the all of Ontro.

Somewhere, out of the past, a voice said, *"Hajime,* let it begin."

I snapped into my *neko-ashi-dachi* cat-stance, and his eyes burned strangely. He hurried to correct his own position—and I threw it at him!

My one trick!

My long left leg lashed up like

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a broken spring. Seven feet off the ground my foot connected with his jaw as he tried to leap backward.

His head snapped back and he fell. A soft moan escaped his lips. *That's all there is to it,* I thought. *Sorry, old fellow.*

And as I stepped over him, somehow, groggily, he tripped me, and I fell across his body. I couldn't believe he had strength enough to remain conscious after that blow, let alone move. I hated to punish him any more.

But he found my throat and slipped a forearm across it before I realized there was a purpose to his action.

No! Don't let it end like this!

It was a bar of steel across my windpipe, my carotids. Then I realized that he was still unconscious, and that this was a reflex instilled by countless years of training. I had seen it happen once, in *shiai.* The man had died because he had been choked unconscious and still fought on, and his opponent thought he had not been applying the choke properly. He tried harder.

But it was rare, so very rare!

I jammed my elbows into his ribs and threw my head back in his face. The grip eased, but not enough. I hated to do it, but I reached up and broke his little finger.

The arm went loose and I twisted free.

He lay there panting, face contorted. My heart went out to the fallen giant, defending his people, his religion, following his orders. I cursed myself as I had never cursed before, for walking over him, instead of around.

I staggered across the room to my little heap of possessions. I sat on the projector case and lit a cigarette.

I couldn't go into the Temple until I got my breath back, until I thought of something to say?

How do you talk a race out of killing itself?

Suddenly—

—Could it happen? Would it work that way? If I read them the Book of Ecclesiastes—if I read them a greater piece of literature than any Locar ever wrote—and as somber—and as pessimistic—and showed them that our race had gone on despite one man's condemning all of life in the highest poetry—showed them that the vanity he had mocked had borne us to the Heavens—would they believe it?—would they change their minds?

I ground out my cigarette on the beautiful floor, and found my notebook. A strange fury rose within me as I stood.

And I walked into the Temple to preach the Black Gospel according to Gallinger, from the Book of Life.

There was silence all about me.

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M'Cwyie had been reading Locar, the rose set at her right hand, target of all eyes.

Until I entered.

Hundreds of people were seated on the floor, barefoot. The few men were as small as the women, I noted.

I had my boots on.

Go all the way, I figured. *You either lose or you win—everything!*

A dozen crones sat in a semicircle behind M'Cwyie. The Mothers.

The barren earth, the dry wombs, the fire-touched.

I moved to the table.

"Dying yourselves, you would condemn your people," I addressed them, "that they may not know the life you have known—the joys, the sorrows, the fullness. —But it is not true that you all must die." I addressed the multitude now. "Those who say this lie. Braxa knows, for she will bear a child—"

They sat there, like rows of Buddhas. M'Cwyie drew back into the semicircle.

"—my child!" I continued, wondering what my father would have thought of this sermon.

". . . And all the women young enough may bear children. It is only your men who are sterile.—And if you permit the doctors of the next expedition to examine you, perhaps even the men may be helped. But if they cannot, you can mate with the men of Earth.

"And ours is not an insignificant people, an insignificant place," I went on. "Thousands of years ago, the Locar of our world wrote a book saying that it was. He spoke as Locar did, but we did not lie down, despite plagues, wars, and famines. We did not die. One by one we beat down the diseases, we fed the hungry, we fought the wars, and, recently, have gone a long time without them. We may finally have conquered them. I do not know.

"But we have crossed millions of miles of nothingness. We have visited another world. And our Locar had said, 'Why bother? What is the worth of it? It is all vanity, anyhow.'

"And the secret is," I lowered my voice, as at a poetry reading, "he was right! It *is* vanity, it *is* pride! It is the hybris of rationalism to always attack the prophet, the mystic, the god. It is our blasphemy which has made us great, and will sustain us, and which the gods secretly admire in us.—All the truly sacred names of God are blasphemous things to speak!"

I was working up a sweat. I paused dizzily.

"Here is the Book of Ecclesiastes," I announced, and began:

" 'Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man . . .' "

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I spotted Braxa in the back, mute, rapt.

I wondered what she was thinking.

And I wound the hours of night about me, like black thread on a spool.

Oh it was late! I had spoken till day came, and still I spoke. I finished Ecclesiastes and continued Gallinger.

And when I finished there was still only a silence.

The Buddhas, all in a row, had not stirred through the night. And after a long while M'Cwyie raised her right hand. One by one the Mothers did the same.

And I knew what that meant.

It meant no, do not, cease, and stop.

It meant that I had failed.

I walked slowly from the room and slumped beside my baggage.

Ontro was gone. Good that I had not killed him . . .

After a thousand years M'Cwyie entered.

She said, "Your job is finished."

I did not move.

"The prophecy is fulfilled," she said. "My people are rejoicing. You have won, holy man. Now leave us quickly."

My mind was a deflated balloon. I pumped a little air back into it.

"I'm not a holy man," I said, "just a second-rate poet with a bad case of hybris."

It lit my last cigarette.

Finally, "All right, what prophecy?"

"The Promise of Locar," she replied, as though the explaining were unnecessary, "that a holy man would come from the heavens to save us in our last hours, if all the dances of Locar were completed. He would defeat the Fist of Malann and bring us life."

"How?"

"As with Braxa, and as the example in the Temple."

"Example?"

"You read us his words, as great as Locar's. You read to us how there is 'nothing new under the sun'. And you mocked his words as you read them—showing us a new thing.

"There has never been a flower on Mars," she said, "but we will learn to grow them.

"You are the Sacred Scoffer," she finished. "He-Who-Must-Mock in-the-Temple—you go shod on holy ground."

"But you voted 'no'," I said.

"I voted not to carry out our original plan, and to let Braxa's child live instead."

"Oh." The cigarette fell from my fingers. How close it had been! How little I had known!

"And Braxa?"

"She was chosen half a Process ago to do the dances—to wait for you."

"But she said that Ontro would stop me."

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M'Cwyie stood there for a long time.

"She had never believed the prophecy herself. Things are not well with her now. She ran away, fearing it was true. When you completed it and we voted, she knew."

"Then she does not love me? Never did?"

"I am sorry, Gallinger. It was the one part of her duty she never managed."

"Duty," I said flatly. . . . Duty-dutyduth! Tra-la!

"She has said good-bye, she does not wish to see you again.

". . . and we will never forget your teachings," she added.

"Don't," I said, automatically, suddenly knowing the great paradox which lies at the heart of all miracles. I did not believe a word of my own gospel, never had.

I stood, like a drunken man, and muttered "M'narra."

I went outside, into my last day on Mars.

I have conquered thee, Malann—and the victory is thine! Rest easy on thy starry bed. God damned!

I left the jeepster there and walked back to the *Aspic,* leaving the burden of life so many footsteps behind me. I went to my cabin, locked the door, and took forty-four sleeping pills.

But when I awakened I was in the dispensary, and alive.

I felt the throb of engines as I slowly stood up and somehow made it to the port.

Blurred Mars hung like a swollen belly above me, until it dissolved, brimmed over, and streamed down my face.

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Sometimes one sees in the eyes of infants an expression preternaturally old and knowing; generally, this disappears soon enough. Was it an illusion? Something purely metabolic? Or have they . . . well . . . forgotten? *Philip Winsor (Harvardman, ex-artilleryman, M.A. (Columbia), college textbook editor for a national publishing company) has evidently considered this question, and has come up with one possible answer.*

MAMA

by Philip Winsor

WHEN I HAVE A PAIN AND WEEP, she comes and feels my head; then she brings the bottle and takes two pills out of it, and feeds them to me. The first time I saw them I stared at them; they were so like myself as I was then—pink, round, and blank; and even now I stare at them, though I am no longer so pink as they are, and my hands and feet extend somewhat farther out from me. And I wonder —for she holds the bottle with such foreboding, she is so careful not to leave it within my reach: if two of the pills will relieve pain, what would the whole bottle do?

In a whole bottle I might find release, from these bars and from this soft integument. I want her to leave the bottle with me, that my hands fumbling may in time remove the top, and I have long had a plan. I have had to wait until I had real pain; I could not pretend. She is very astute about some things; she knows when my weeping comes of pain and when it comes of this vile need of mine for her. But now my head aches and I have cried out to her; she has answered, "I'm coming!"

It is through her desire that I should speak that I shall get the pills. She kneels beside me as I stand at the bars of my crib; she says "Mama! Darling, I'm your Mama! Say 'Mama!' " But of all words that is the most impossible for me to say. Then she holds my toys up before me, one after another, and pronounces their names: "Ball! Pretty ball! Teddy!" I could easily repeat these words to her, but to speak is to consent to these degrading circumstances, to plunge further down this fearful shaft.

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I have spoken, once; I have attempted my plan once before. I wept; she came to me, she took out the bottle. I cried out to her: "Hi!" — it is the word least like a word, most like a sound. She whirled— my plan demands that I surprise her; she flung the bottle, but not within my reach, as I had hoped; it rolled a distance away from the crib. And she threw herself down beside me. "What did you say, darling?" I had failed, I spoke no more. But in saying that one word I knew I had done myself damage. Once it was out it took existence apart from me; it drew me towards itself and away from my memory of what was before. I think I have only one more chance; to speak again and to fail would leave me helpless. But the word will not be "Mama"—to say that word would be especially to acknowledge this fraudulent passage where one is afflicted with shape.

I stand at the bars of my crib, I take steps across the floor to her, I try to feed myself when she gives me the spoon, but I do not speak. She picks me up and holds me against her and talks to me, and then I know what she's saying almost as if I understood the words —"Darling boy, I don't know what's wrong, but *listen* to me: I love you, no matter if you never say a word all your life; and we'll never let you be hurt if we can help it, and I know you don't understand a word I'm saying, but we'll always be with you and we love you and you understand *that!*"

I am sure when she says "love" she is speaking of the pitiful dependency which relates flesh to other flesh. It is a repellent thing, but I am not wholly apart from it; her words affect me strangely. She would hinder my release if she could; she would retain me in humanity. This crib has bars, these walls meet the ceiling; only pain has no end here. But I think she has no understanding of this. And then I feel her tears.

"Well, darling, this is how it is; there must be some purpose to it; we're going to do our best!" Her words confound the truth I brought with me here, the truth which I have already forgotten somewhat but shall soon regain. "Purpose! Our best!" It is strange to me here how I hurl incongruities from me with a special breaking noise— and she kisses me and says, "Life *is* absurd, isn't it, sweetheart!" but she pats my back for gas.

I do not understand. Nothing here is like what was before, except the sky out the window and the rustling of the trees, and, at times, her face. I remember that, before, there were no bars, only balance—and then suddenly a rushing came, and all about me strained, all bowed, and throughout awareness rang the cry: "Humanity!" What severance and compression were to be sensed in

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that word! And then there was an I, myself, snatched in strands from the knowing space, a throbbing cluster hung doubled in warmth and dark; and from beyond there was pounded to me through my blood the command: "Forget! Forget!"

And the time came when the constriction about me increased in sharp waves. The force of these waves dislodged me, and each succeeding wave as it intensified pushed me. And slowly I emerged into light and into these circumstances. I do not understand. Here I am rolled in my own warm stink until she comes to clean me: "You don't like being wet, do you, darling?" Yet I know as I look at her, bending over me with a pin in her mouth, that if I could forget I would think she was precious.

I cannot forget, though surely to forget enables you to live here. I think I am unlike others in this; I think the command: "Forget!" came too weakly to me to impel me to obey, as it compelled others. Another creature with an appearance similar to mine was once put into this crib with me, and I saw no sign in his face of any such awareness as mine. He had forgotten. He gurgled his consent to flesh and with curiosity he put his finger in my eye.

But the thing most alien to me is the round face on the wall whose ticking I draw in with my breath. Its hands steadily circle its face, and that is of importance to her; I do not understand. But it tells me that just as this room has walls, the spell of flesh has its term.

"What's wrong with you, darling?" She has come now. She feels my forehead, leaves, and returns with the pills in her hand. This time I must not fail. She is so concerned! I cannot help but feel tenderness for her; I shall not see her again. And I have an impulse —is it to further my plan by saying the word which will most surprise her? Or is it that as I look at her I feel that now my release is close I can at last do a kindness for her? I say, "Hi, Mama!" She gasps, she throws herself down on her knees beside me, and the bottle flies from her hands into my crib and is hidden from her under my blanket. But in my head all is turbulence. The word I have uttered is enormously powerful: it exerts a propulsion I cannot understand. I am stunned, I say again, "Mama!" — for she is lovely! How large, how light is this room!—Did I not until this moment have a sense of things previous? I can remember nothing. I pick up the bottle, full of the pretty pills, and give it to her; I raise my arms to her and cry: "Hi, Mama! Pretty! Wet! Hi, Mama! Ball! Teddy! Mama! Mama! Hi, Mama!" ◄

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SCIENCE

There are some who will see in this article an arrangement of historical significance in the realm of The Twenty Gases. What's that? which twenty, where twenty? Go thou and learn. Others, alas, will merely suspect SF's most outstanding teetotaler of trying to fluoridate their whiskey. Sic friat crispudum. . . .

WELCOME, STRANGER!

by Isaac Asimov

THERE ARE FASHIONS IN SCIENCE AS IN EVERYTHING ELSE. Conduct an experiment that brings about an unusual success and before you can say, "There are a dozen imitations!" there are a dozen imitations!

Consider the element, xenon (pronounced zee'non). It was discovered in 1898 by William Ramsay and Morris William Travers, THE ELEMENT OF PERFECTION (F & SF, November, 1960).

Like other elements of the same type it was isolated from liquid air. The existence of these elements in air had remained unsuspected through over a century of ardent chemical analysis of the air so when they finally dawned upon the chemical consciousness, they were greeted as strange and unexpected newcomers. Indeed, the name, xenon, is the neutral form of the Greek word for "strange", so that xenon is "the strange one" in all literalness.

Xenon belongs to a group of elements commonly known as the "inert gases" (because they are chemically inert) or the "rare gases" (because they are rare), or "noble gases" because the standoffishness that results from chemical inertness seems to indicate a haughty sense of self-importance.

Xenon is the most rare of the stable inert gases and, as a matter of fact, is the most rare of all the stable elements on Earth. Xenon occurs only in the atmosphere and there it makes up about 5.3 parts per million by weight. Since the atmosphere weighs about 5,500,000,000,000,000 (five and a half quadrillion) tons, this means that the planetary supply of xenon comes to just about 30,000,000,000 (thirty billion) tons. This seems ample, taken in full, but picking xenon atoms

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out of the overpoweringly more common constituents of the atmosphere is an arduous task and so xenon isn't a common substance and never will be.

What with one thing and another, then, xenon was not a popular substance in the chemical laboratories. Its chemical, physical and nuclear properties were worked out, but beyond that there seemed little worth doing with it. It remained the little strange one and received cold shoulders and frosty smiles.

Then, in 1962, an unusual experiment involving xenon was announced and from all over the world, broad smiles broke out across chemical countenances, and little xenon was led into the test-tube with friendly solicitude. "Welcome, stranger!" was the cry everywhere, and now you can't open a chemical journal anywhere without finding several papers on xenon.

What happened?

If you expect a quick answer, you little know me. Let me take my customary route round Robin Hood's barn and begin by stating, first of all, that xenon is a gas.

Being a gas is a matter of accident. No substance is a gas intrinsically, but only insofar as temperature dictates. On Venus, water and ammonia are both gases. On Earth, ammonia is a gas, but water is not. On Titan, neither ammonia nor water are gases.

So I'll have to set up an arbitrary criterion to suit my present purpose. Let's say that any substance that remains a gas at — 100° C. (— 148° F) is a Gas with a capital letter, and concentrate on those. This is a temperature that is never reached on Earth, even in an Antarctic winter of extraordinary severity so that no Gas is ever anything but gaseous on Earth (except occasionally in chemical laboratories).

Now why is a Gas a Gas?

I can start by saying that every substance is made up of atoms, or of closely-knit groups of atoms, said groups being called molecules. There are attractive forces between atoms or molecules which make them "sticky" and tend to hold them together. Heat, however, lends these atoms or molecules a certain kinetic energy (energy of motion) which tends to drive them apart, since each atom or molecule has its own idea of where it wants to go.*

No, I am not implying that atoms know what they are doing and have consciousness. This is just my teleological way of talking. Teleology is forbidden in scientific articles, but it so happens I enjoy sin.

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The attractive forces among a given set of atoms or molecules are relatively constant, but the kinetic energy varies with the temperature. Therefore, if the temperature is raised high enough, any group of atoms or molecules will fly apart and the material will become a gas. At temperatures over 6000° C. all known substances are gases.

Of course, there are only a few exceptional substances with interatomic or intermolecular forces so strong that it takes 6000° C. to overcome them (they're for another article some day perhaps). Some substances have such weak intermolecular attractive forces that the warmth of a summer day supplies enough kinetic energy to convert them to gas (the common anesthetic, ether, is an example).

Still others have intermolecular attractive forces so much weaker still that there is enough heat at a temperature of — 100° C. to keep them gases and it is these that are the Gases I am talking about.

The intermolecular or interatomic forces arise out of the distribution of electrons within the atoms or molecules. The electrons are distributed among various "electron shells," according to a system we can accept without detailed explanation. For instance, the aluminum atom contains 13 electrons, which are distributed as follows: 2 in the innermost shell, 8 in the next shell and 3 in the next shell. We can therefore signify the electron distribution in the aluminum atom as 2/8/3.

The most stable and symmetrical distribution of the electrons among the electron shells is that distribution in which the outermost shell holds either all the electrons it can hold, or 8 electrons—whichever is less. The innermost electron shell can only hold 2, the next can hold 8 and each of the rest can hold more than 8. Except for the situation where only the innermost shell contains electrons, then, the stable situation consists of 8 electrons in the outermost shell.

There are exactly six elements known, in which this situation of maximum stability exists:

Element	*Symbol*	*Electron distribution*	*Electron total*
helium	He	2	2
neon	Ne	2/8	10
argon	Ar	2/8/8	18
krypton	Kr	2/8/18/8	36
xenon	Xe	2/8/18/18/8	54
radon	Rn	2/8/18/32/18/8	86

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Other atoms without this fortunate electronic distribution are forced to attempt to achieve it by grabbing additional electrons, or getting rid of some they already possess, or sharing electrons. In so doing, they undergo chemical reactions. The atoms of the six elements listed above, however, need do nothing of this sort and are sufficient unto themselves. They have no need to shift electrons in any way and that means they take part in no chemical reactions and are inert. (At least, this is what I would have said prior to 1962.)

The atoms of the inert gas family listed above are so self-sufficient in fact that the atoms even ignore one another. There is little interatomic attraction so that all are gases at room temperature and all but radon are Gases.

To be sure there is *some* interatomic attraction (for no atoms or molecules exist among which there is no attraction at all). If one lowers the temperature sufficiently, a point is reached where the attractive forces become dominant over the disruptive effect of kinetic energy, and every single one of the inert gases will, eventually, become an inert liquid.

What about other elements? As I said, these have atoms with electron distributions of less than maximum stability and each has a tendency to alter that distribution in the direction of stability. For instance, the sodium atom (Na) has a distribution, 2/8/1. If it could get rid of the outermost electron, what would be left would have the stable 2/8 configuration of neon. Again, the chlorine atom (Cl) has a distribution, 2/8/7. If it could gain an electron, it would have the 2/8/8 distribution of argon.

Consequently, if a sodium atom encounters a chlorine atom, the transfer of an electron from the sodium atom to the chlorine atom satisfies both. However, the loss of a negatively-charged electron, leaves the sodium atom with a deficiency of negative charge or, which is the same thing, an excess of positive charge. It becomes a positively charged sodium ion (Na^+). The chlorine atom, on the other hand, gaining an electron, gains an excess of negative charge and becomes a negatively-charged chloride ion* (Cl^-).

Opposite charges attract, so the sodium ion attracts all the chloride ions within reach and vice versa. These strong attractions cannot be overcome by the kinetic energy induced at ordinary temperatures and

**The charged chlorine atom is called "chloride ion" and not "chlorine ion" as a convention of chemical nomenclature we might just as well accept with a weary sigh. Anyway, the "d" is not a typographical error.*

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so the ions hold together firmly enough for "sodium chloride" (common salt) to be a solid. It does not become a gas, in fact, till a temperature of 1413° C. is reached.

Next consider the carbon atom (C). Its electron distribution is 2/4. If it lost 4 electrons, it would gain the 2 helium configuration; if it gained 4 electrons, it would gain the 2/8 neon configuration. Losing or gaining that many electrons is not easy, so the carbon atom shares electrons instead. It can, for instance, contribute one of its electrons to a "shared pool" of two electrons; a pool to which a neighboring carbon atom also contributes an electron. With its second electron it can form another shared pool with a second neighbor and with its third and fourth, two more pools with two more neighbors. Each neighbor can set up additional pools with other neighbors. In the way, every carbon atom is surrounded by four other carbon atoms.

These shared electrons fit into the outermost electron shells of both the carbon atoms that contribute. Each carbon atom has 4 electrons of its own in that outermost shell and 4 electrons contributed (one apiece) by four neighbors. Thus, each carbon atom has the 2/8 configuration of neon, but only at the price of remaining close to its neighbors. The result is a strong interatomic attraction, even though electrical charge is not involved. Carbon is a solid and is not a gas until a temperature of 4200° C. is reached.

The atoms of metallic elements also stick together strongly, for similar reasons, so that tungsten, for instance, is not a gas until a temperature of 5900° C. is reached.

We cannot, then, expect to have a Gas, when atoms achieve stable electron distribution by transferring electrons in such a manner as to gain an electric charge; or by sharing electrons in so complicated a fashion that vast numbers of atoms stick together in one piece.

What we need is something intermediate. We need a situation where atoms achieve stability by sharing electrons (so that no electric charge arises) but where the total number of atoms involved in the sharing is very small so that only small molecules result. Within the molecules, attractive forces may be large, and the molecules may not be shaken apart without extreme temperature. The attractive forces between one molecule and its neighbor, however, may be small—and that will do.

Let's consider the hydrogen atom, for instance. It has but a single electron. Two hydrogen atoms can each contribute its single electron to form a shared pool. As long as they stay together, each can count both electrons in its outermost shell and each will have the stable heli-

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um configuration. Furthermore, neither hydrogen atom will have any electrons left to form pools with other neighbors, hence the molecule will end there. Hydrogen gas will consist of two-atom molecules (H_2).

The attractive force between the atoms in the molecule is large and it takes temperatures of more than 2000° C. to shake even a small fraction of the hydrogen molecules into single atoms. There will, however, be only weak attractions among separate hydrogen molecules, each of which, under the new arrangement, will have reached a satisfactory pitch of self-sufficiency. Hydrogen, therefore, will be a Gas; one not made up of separate atoms as is the case with the inert gases, but of two-atom molecules.

Something similar will be true in the case of fluorine (electronic distribution 2/7), oxygen (2/6) and nitrogen (2/5). The fluorine atom can contribute an electron and form a shared pool of two electrons with a neighboring fluorine atom which also contributes an electron. Two oxygen atoms can contribute two electrons apiece to form a shared pool of four electrons* and two nitrogen atoms can contribute three electrons each and form a shared pool of six electrons.

In each case, the atoms will achieve the 2/8 distribution of neon at the cost of forming paired molecules. As a result, enough stability is achieved so that fluorine (F_2), oxygen (O_2) and nitrogen (N_2) are all Gases.

The oxygen atom can also form a shared pool of two electrons with each of two neighbors and those two neighbors can form another shared pool of two electrons among themselves. The result is a combination of three oxygen atoms (O_3), each with a neon configuration. This combination, O_3, is called ozone, and it is a Gas, too.

Oxygen, nitrogen, and fluorine can form mixed molecules, also. For instance, a nitrogen and an oxygen atom can combine to achieve the necessary stability for each. Nitrogen may also form shared pools of two electrons with each of three fluorine atoms, while oxygen may do so with each of two. The resulting compounds: nitrogen oxide (NO), nitrogen trifluoride (NF_3) and oxygen difluoride (OF_2) are all Gases.

Atoms which, by themselves, will not form Gases, may do so if combined with either hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen or fluorine. For instance, two chlorine atoms (2/8/7, remember) will form a shared pool of two

**Actually, the neat picture of shared pools which I present is somewhat oversimplified. It falls a bit short in the case of oxygen and a couple of others I will mention, but this need not concern us. We are close enough. I mention it only to forestall letters.*

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electrons so that both achieve the 2/8/8 argon configuration. Chlorine (Cl_2) is therefore a gas at room temperature; with intermolecular attractions, however, large enough to keep it from being a Gas. Yet if a chlorine atom forms a shared pool of two electrons with a fluorine atom, the result, chlorine fluoride (ClF) *is* a Gas.

The boron atom (2/3) can form a shared pool of two electrons with each of three fluorine atoms and the carbon atom a shared pool of two electrons with each of four fluorine atoms. The resulting compounds, boron trifluoride (BF_3) and carbon tetrafluoride (CF_4) are Gases.

A carbon atom can form a shared pool of two electrons with each of four hydrogen atoms, or a shared pool of four electrons with an oxygen atom and the resulting compounds, methane (CH_4) and carbon monoxide (CO) are gases. A two-carbon combination may set up a shared pool of two electrons with each of four hydrogen atoms (and a shared pool of four electrons with one another); a silicon atom may set up a shared pool of two electrons with each of four hydrogen atoms. The compounds, ethylene (C_2H_4) and silane (SiH_4) are Gases.

Altogether, then, I can list 20 Gases, which fall into the following categories:

(1) Five elements made up of single atoms; helium, neon, argon, krypton, and xenon.

(2) Four elements made up of two-atom molecules: hydrogen, nitrogen, oxygen and fluorine.

(3) One element made up of three-atom molecules: ozone.

(4) Ten compounds, with molecules built up of two different elements, at least one of which falls into category (2).

As far as I know, nobody has ever gathered these Gases into a single table, so I will gladly do it for the convenience of anyone who may find it convenient. I will list them in order of increasing boiling point and will give that boiling point both in the Centigrade scale (°C) and in the absolute scale, (°K.)*, see Table I.

If any Gentle Reader, by the way, knows of a twenty-first Gas, or a twenty-second, a twenty-third and so on, I would love to hear of it.

The five inert gases on the list are scattered among the fifteen other Gases. To be sure, two of the three lowest-boiling Gases are helium and neon, but argon is seventh, krypton is tenth, and xenon is seventeenth. It would not be surprising if all the Gases, then, were as inert as the inert gases.

For a discussion of the various temperature scales, see my article THE HEIGHT OF UP (F & SF, October 1959)

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TABLE I

The Twenty Gases

Substance	*Formula*	B.P. (C°)	B.P. (K°)
Helium	He	—268.9	4.2
Hydrogen	H_2	—252.8	20.3
Neon	Ne	—245.9	27.2
Nitrogen	N_2	—195.8	77.3
Carbon Monoxide	CO	—192	81
Fluorine	F_2	—188	85
Argon	Ar	—185.7	87.4
Oxygen	O_2	—183.0	90.1
Methane	CH_4	—161.5	111.6
Krypton	Kr	—152.9	120.2
Nitrogen Oxide	NO	—151.8	121.3
Oxygen Difluoride	OF_2	—144.8	128.3
Carbon Tetrafluoride	CF_4	—128	145
Nitrogen Trifluoride	NF_3	—120	153
Ozone	O_3	—111.9	161.2
Silane	SiH_4	—111.8	161.3
Xenon	Xe	—107.1	166.0
Ethylene	C_2H_4	—103.9	169.2
Boron trifluoride	BF_3	—101	172
Chlorine fluoride	ClF	—100.8	172.3

Perhaps they might be at that, if the smug, self-sufficient molecules that made them up were permanent, unbreakable affairs, but they are not. All the molecules can be broken down under certain conditions and the free atoms (those of fluorine and oxygen particularly) are active indeed.

This does not show up in the Gases themselves. Suppose a fluorine molecule breaks up into two fluorine atoms and these find themselves surrounded only by fluorine molecules. The only possible result is the

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re-formation of a fluorine molecule and nothing much has happened. If, however, there are molecules other than fluorine present, a new molecular combination of greater stability than F_2 is possible (indeed almost certain in the case of fluorine) and a chemical reaction results.

The fluorine molecule does have a tendency to break apart (to a very small extent) even at ordinary temperatures, and this is enough. The free fluorine atom will attack virtually anything non-fluorine in sight and the heat of reaction will raise the temperature which will bring about a more extensive split in fluorine molecules and so on. The result is that molecular fluorine is the most chemically active of all substances (with chlorine fluoride almost on a par with it and ozone making a pretty good third).

The oxygen molecule is torn apart with greater difficulty and, therefore remains intact (and inert) under conditions where fluorine does not. You may think that oxygen is an active element but for the most part this is only true at elevated temperatures, where more energy is available to tear its molecule apart. After all, we live in a sea of free oxygen without damage. And this is not just a matter of adaptation. Inanimate substances such as paper, wood, coal and gasoline, all considered inflammable, can be bathed by oxygen for indefinite periods without perceptible chemical reaction—until heated.

Of course, once heated, oxygen does become active and combines easily with other Gases such as hydrogen, carbon monoxide and methane which, by that token, can't be considered particularly inert, either.

The nitrogen molecule is torn apart with still more difficulty and, before the discovery of the inert gases, nitrogen was *the* inert gas *par excellence.* It and carbon tetrafluoride are the only Gases on the list, other than the inert gases themselves, that are respectably inert, but even they can be torn apart.

Life depends on the fact that certain bacteria can split the nitrogen molecule; and important industrial processes arise out of the fact that man has learned to do the same thing on a large scale. Once the nitrogen molecule is torn apart, the individual nitrogen atom is quite active, bounces around in all sorts of reactions and, in fact, is the fourth most common atom in living tissue and is essential to all its workings.

In the case of the inert gases, all is different. There are no molecules to pull apart. We are dealing with the self-sufficient atom itself and there seemed little likelihood that combination with any other atom would produce a situation of greater stability. Attempts to get inert

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gases to form compounds, at the time they were discovered, failed, and chemists were quickly satisfied that this made sense.

To be sure, chemists continued to try, now and again, but they also continued to fail. (Please don't believe the silly propaganda that once Science—with a capital S— accepts something it becomes an article of faith that is no longer questioned and no longer tested. There are always capable men who question and test any particular accepted tenet. Those who accept the tenet without question are not necessarily being wicked and authoritarian; they are probably very busy questioning and testing some other tenet. Remember one thing: the number of problems in science is infinite, while the number of scientists is finite.)

Until 1962, then, the only successes chemists had had in tying the inert gas atoms to other atoms was in the formation of "clathrates." In a clathrate, the atoms making up a molecule form a cage-like structure and, sometimes, an extraneous atom—even an inert gas atom—is trapped within the cage as it forms. The inert gas is then tied to the substance and cannot be liberated without breaking down the molecule. However, the inert gas atom is only physically confined; it has not formed a chemical bond.

And yet, let's reason things out a bit. The boiling point of helium is 4.2° K; that of neon is 27.2, that of argon is 87.4, that of krypton is 120.2, that of xenon is 166.0. The boiling point of radon, the sixth and last inert gas and the one with the most massive atom, is 211.3° K. (— 61.8° C.) Radon is not even a Gas, but merely a gas.

Furthermore, as the mass of the inert gas atoms increases, the ionization potential (a quanity which measures the ease with which an electron can be removed altogether from a particular atom) decreases. The increasing boiling point and decreasing ionization potential both indicate that the inert gases become less inert as the mass of the individual atoms rises.

By this reasoning, radon would be the least inert of the inert gases and efforts to form compounds should concentrate upon it. However, randon is a radioactive element with a half-life of less than four days and is so excessively rare that it can be worked with only under extremely specialized conditions. The next best bet, then, is xenon. This is very rare, but it is available and it is, at least stable.

Then, if xenon *is* to form a chemical bond, with what other atom might it be expected to react? Naturally, the most logical bet would be to choose the most reactive substance of all—fluorine or some fluorine-containing compound. If xenon wouldn't react with that, it wouldn't react with anything.

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(This may sound as though I am being terribly wise after the event, and I am. However, there are some who weren't. I am told that Linus Pauling reasoned thus in 1932, well before the event, and that a gentleman named A. von Antropoff did so in 1924.)

Well, in 1962, Neil Bartlett and others at the University of British Columbia were working with a very unusual compound, platinum hexafluoride (PtF_6). To their surprise, they discovered that it was a particularly active compound. Naturally, they wanted to see what it could be made to do and one of the thoughts that arose was that here might be something that could finally pin down an inert gas atom.

So Bartlett mixed the vapors of PrF_6 with xenon and, to his astonishment, obtained a compound which seemed to be $XePF_6$, xenon platinum hexafluoride. The anouncement of this result left a certain area of doubt, however. Platinum hexafluoride was a sufficiently complex compound to make it just barely possible that it had formed a clathrate and trapped the xenon.

A group of chemists at Argonne National Laboratory in Chicago therefore tried the straight xenon-plus-fluorine experiment, heating one part of xenon with five parts of fluorine under pressure at 400° C. in a nickel container. They obtained xenon tetrafluoride (XeF_4), a straightforward compound of an inert gas, with no possibility of a clathrate. (Yes, I know this experiment could have been tried years before, but it is no disgrace that it wasn't. Pure xenon is very hard to get and pure fluorine is very dangerous to handle, and no chemist could reasonably have been expected to undergo the expense and the risk for so slim-chanced a catch as an inert gas compound until after Bartlett's experiment had increased that "slim-chance" tremendously.)

And once the Argonne results were announced, all hell broke loose. It looked as though every inorganic chemist in the world went gibbering into the inert gas field. A whole raft of xenon compounds including, XeF_2, XeF_8, XeF_6, XeF_8, XeO_2, XeO_3, H_4XeO_4 and H_4XeO_6 have been reported.

Enough radon was scraped together to form radon tetrafluoride (RnF_4). Even krypton, which is more inert than xenon, has been trapped, and krypton tetrafluorile (KrF_4) has been formed.

The remaining three inert gases, argon, neon and helium (in order of increasing inertness) as yet remain untouched. They are the last of the bachelors, but the world of chemistry has the sound of wedding bells ringing in its ears, and it is a bad time for bachelors.

As an old (and cautious) married man, I can only say to this—no comment. ◄

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Music and Science Fiction are not commonly met together in stories—or, very often, in writers. Lloyd Biggle, Jr. is an exception. When in high school he won prizes in national competitions for both literature and music; "and this conflict," he writes, "has not yet been resolved." He has an A.B. in English, an M.M. in Music Literature, and a Ph.D. in Musicology; and frequently uses musical themes in his writing, Science Fiction and otherwise—the "otherwise" including featured appearances in mystery magazines and anthologies: Ellery Queen's, *for example. Born in Iowa, Mr. Biggle now lives in Michigan, is an overseas veteran of World War II, is married to a violinist and has two young violinists about the house. Which, he says, "makes me effectively outnumbered." In this, the first of his thirty-six published Science Fiction stories to appear here, he inquires into the questions of what happens to a language when no one is left to speak it—to a song, when no one can sing it . . .*

WINGS OF SONG

by Lloyd Biggle, Jr.

KARL BRANDON SAW THE SIGN by accident. An aircar cut below them, and he looked after it because it was a late-model *Smirès*, and his eye picked out one small sign of a row of small signs on the roofs of the cluttered little shopping circle.

"Antiques," the sign said, and Brandon looked at his watch and calculated that he had twenty-five minutes to spare. He nudged his chauffeur, and pointed at the sign.

Two minutes later he was inside the shop. He inventoried the littered, dust-covered interior with one swift glance, and turned to leave. He had the patiently-developed instinct of a connoisseur, and his instinct told him there was nothing to be gained by sifting over that shabby collection of junk.

The proprietor bobbed up at his elbow, a small, bald-headed man who nodded, smiled, rubbed his hands together. "Yes, sir?"

"Lighters?" Brandon said.

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"Yes, sir. Certainly, sir. We have a fine collection, sir. If you will step this way . . ."

Brandon propelled his bulky figure after the proprietor, trompling the little man's heels in his excitement. He could always settle with his instinct later, and if this unlikely place actually had a fine collection of lighters it would be the coup of his lifetime—here, in Pala City, right under Harry Morrison's nose! Morrison would raise an uproar that could be heard all the way to Acturis, and Brandon would enjoy every decibel of it.

The proprietor placed a tray before him, and Brandon took a deep breath and looked the contents over slowly, savoring his disappointment. They were an unclassified mess of corroded, rusted fragments. There was not even a fair specimen in the lot.

"No!" Brandon snapped, and turned away.

"Got one that actually works," the proprietor said. He picked up a mishappen piece of metal, thumbed it, and held up the flickering flame.

Brandon snorted. "My good man. I have seven hundred and sixty-one lighters in my collection, and *all* of them work."

The proprietor bobbed his head, yielding to the inevitable. "Something else?"

Brandon shook his head impatiently. He took another glance about the room as he reached for the door a second time, and hesitated. A strange object caught his eye, a strange object lying at the top of a heap of strange objects. Under the thick dust that covered its surface Brandon's sharp eyes caught a suggestion of luster, of peculiar texture.

He picked it up. It looked to be some kind of container with a long handle, but it had no opening except for two queerly-shaped slots in the top and a jagged hole in the bottom that was obviously the result of a blow. Brandon fingered the hole, stared at it, moved closer to the light.

"What the devil!" he muttered.

Hovering at his elbow, the omnipresent proprietor emitted a triumphant chuckle. "Didn't think you'd recognize it," he said. "It's *wood.*"

"Wood?" Brandon bent closer for another look.

"Ever see any before?" the proprietor asked.

"I don't know. I think I saw a wood table, once, in a museum."

"Possible," the proprietor said. "Possible. But it's rare. And this is a genuine antique. Look."

He moved the object under the light, and pointed. On the inside, dimly visible through one of the slots, was a faded label. "Jacob Raymann At Ye Bell House, Southmark, London, 1688."

"Genuine," the proprietor said. "Nearly a thousand years old."

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"You don't say. And—it's made of wood?"

"Wood. From a tree." The proprietor produced a cloth, and dusted off the smooth surface. "From a tree," he said again, holding it up to the light. "Ever see a tree? Of course you haven't. There used to be lots of trees on Mother Earth, but they would never grow anywhere else. Now there isn't anything on Mother Earth. The cost of war, my friend, is not measured in money, but in things irretrievably lost, such as trees."

"What is this thing, anyway?"

"It's a *violin*."

Brandon rubbed a finger over the surface. Beneath the luster was a delicate, wavy pattern, unlike anything he had ever seen.

"What's a violin?"

"A musical instrument."

"You don't say. How does it work?"

For the first time the little proprietor seemed unsure of himself. "Well, I don't know, exactly."

"Not much room in there for the mechanism," Brandon said, peering through the hole.

"My dear sir!" the proprietor exclaimed. "There was no mechanism in those days."

"Then how the devil did it produce music?"

The proprietor shook his head.

Brandon firmly returned it to its place on the table. "What good is it now?"

"Think, my friend. Centuries before the last great war there was a tree growing on Earth, one of millions, perhaps, and this—this was part of its living tissue. A master craftsman shaped it with his own hands, for there were no machines in those days. It is made of wood, the rarest material in the galaxy, and it is a splendid ornament. Beautiful. For the wall, perhaps, or a table . . ."

"Ornament be damned! If I buy a musical instrument I want it to make music. I've made seven hundred and sixty-one lighters work, and I ought to be able to get music out of one antique—what'd you call it?"

"Violin."

"There should be books somewhere that would tell how it works."

The proprietor nodded. "Doubtless the University Library would have something."

"How much?"

"Ten thousand."

Brandon stared. "Ridiculous! It's smashed, it doesn't work, and there are probably all kinds of parts missing. Why, it's just a box!"

"Genuine antique," the proprietor purred. "Genuine wood. Nearly a thousand . . ."

"Good morning!"

Brandon let the heavy door slam behind him. His chauffeur leaped out and stood waiting for him. He stopped for a moment, lost in thought. It was time he de-

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veloped another hobby. He was losing interest in lighters—there were no more good specimens to be had, at any price. And then, wood. Harry Morrison didn't have a sliver of wood in all of his collections.

Brandon turned, and re-entered the shop. "I'll take it," he said.

Morrison laid aside his magnifying glass, and nodded gravely. "Yes," he said. He stroked a long cheek with long, carefully manicured fingers. The nails were tinted faintly azure. Brandon watched with a frown. He considered Morrison a bit of a fop.

"Yes," Morrison said again. "It just may be a find."

"That's what I thought," Brandon said.

"Or again—" Morrison tilted back his handsome, greying head and gazed at the ceiling. "—it may not. Let's see the picture. Ah—yes. It's clear enough, what you can see of it. Suppose this fellow is the musician that plays on it. Too bad he has the end tucked under his arm. Is this the best one they could find?"

"It's the *only* one they could find."

"Hmmm. Yes. Well, obviously there are pieces missing. These things . . ."

"Strings," Brandon said airily. "They seem to run the whole length of it, though you can't see how they're fastened on because the fellow's arm is in the way. And what the devil is this in his other hand? Looks like a long rod."

"We don't know, exactly. It isn't mentioned in the description."

"Ah—the description. Let's hear it."

Brandon read: "'Violin. The most important of the stringed instruments. Its main parts are the body, consisting of sound board, back and ribs; the fingerboard, which ends in the pegbox and scroll; the string holder, or tailpiece; and the bridge. Inside the body is found the bass-bar and sound post. The four strings are tuned in fifths, g, d, a and e.'

"There may have been more, but it was an old book and some of the pages were missing."

Morrison looked at the picture again, and shook his head. "Obviously there are pieces missing. And it gives you no hint about the most important thing of all. How do you play the thing?"

"I don't know," Brandon said. "Even Professor Weltz didn't have the vaguest idea. He's going to study it. He photographed it, and took measurements, and he's going to have a copy made."

"Out of wood?" Morrison asked.

Brandon chuckled. "Metal or plastic. The Professor thinks he'll be able to answer a lot of questions about ancient music when he figures out how to play it."

"Just what will you do with it?"

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"Get it fixed," Brandon said. "And learn to play it."

"It may be more of a problem than you think. Too bad there isn't a picture of one being played."

"Oh, we'll figure it out. What I wanted to ask you, though—" He turned the violin over, and fingered the hole in the bottom. "—the first step will be to get this fixed. Who knows how to repair a hole in wood?"

Morrison was silent for a long time. Finally he said, "I'll have to make some inquiries. Perhaps no one."

Brandon's private secretary was an earnest, hard-working young man who possessed a happy faculty for enthusiastically making Brandon's pet projects his own. Brandon appreciated this and paid him accordingly.

But on this occasion, as he carefully placed the plastic box on Brandon's desk, he did not act enthused. He said glumly, "This is going to be harder than I thought."

Brandon opened the box for a fond look at the violin. "What's the trouble, Parker?"

"I talked to the Director of the Congressional Museum. They have one wood object there, a table."

"I remember," Brandon said.

"He said the table had to be repaired when they got it, but it was only a problem of finding some kind of an adhesive that would work on wood. They had all the parts—all they had to do was put them together. I got the formula for the adhesive."

Brandon nodded his approval.

"But he's never had the problem of supplying missing parts made out of wood. He hadn't any idea of how it should be done, or who could do it. I found a technician in our Polivar Division who offered to fit a piece of plastic into the hole—"

"Nonsense!" Brandon snapped.

"Exactly. He also thought he might be able to do it with wood, but of course he hadn't any. He's willing to try if we furnish the wood.

"Get some wood for him, then."

"That's just it, sir. There isn't any. I've inquired everywhere."

"There must be some somewhere. I found this without even trying."

"It must have been a stroke of luck, sir, because everywhere I ask . . ."

"Yes. Trick is in knowing where to ask. Get me Morrison."

He waited impatiently until Morrison's serene countenance flashed onto the wall screen. Morrison raised a hand in greeting—his fingernails on this day were tinted a dusky red—and said, "That violin of yours, I suppose."

Brandon nodded. "Harry, I'm sure you know every antique dealer worth knowing. Would you pass the word around that I want some wood?"

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"I've already made inquiries," Morrison said. "If any turns up I'll let you know."

"Thanks."

"Unless it happens to be something worth saving. There's not any point in destroying one valuable object just to repair another one that's broken."

Brandon resisted an impulse to smile. His finding the violin had piqued Morrison more than he had realized. It went without saying that any valuable objects that turned up were destined for Morrison's collections. "No, that shouldn't be necessary," he said. "I just need a few small pieces."

"To be sure. If I find anything suitable, I'll see that you're notified."

Morrison waved, and his image faded. Brandon sat still, and twiddled his thumbs fretfully. He got up and paced the floor. He seated himself again, and his finger dug at a button on his desk. "Parker!" he roared. "Get me some wood!"

Parker dropped from sight for an entire week. He returned looking wan and tired, and Brandon, after a quick glance at his face, said, "No luck, eh? Where were you?"

"At the Congressional Reference Library, sir."

"You expected to find wood there?"

"Information about wood, sir. I'm afraid not very much is known about it. But I did find one thing. About a hundred years ago, on the planet Beloman—that's in the Partu Sector—there was a man who gave his occupation as *wood-carver*."

"I doubt if he's still available for consultation," Brandon said dryly.

"No, sir. But if his occupation was wood-carver, he must have been doing something with wood, which means he must have had some. If he worked at it very long he must have had a lot of wood, and there may be some left there."

"Wood-carver," Brandon mused. "One who carves wood. One who makes things out of wood. But that's impossible! Even a hundred years ago there wasn't enough wood around for anyone to make a profession of using it. Where'd you get the information?"

"Out of a little book, called *Strange Occupations*. All it said was, 'In the last census a man on Beloman gave his occupation as wood-carver.' The Partu Sector is rather remote, and it may be that inquiries such as those Mr. Morrison is making wouldn't reach there. I think it might be worth investigating."

"Beloman. Sounds familiar. Do I have some interests there?"

"Yes, sir. You control some mining properties. If you asked your Resident Superintendent, I'm sure he could find out easily enough if there is any wood available."

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"It's an idea. It might even be a good idea. Have I ever been to Beloman, Parker?"

"Not to my knowledge, sir. Certainly not since I've been with you."

"I don't think I've even been in the Partu Sector. Parker, make up an inventory of my holdings in Partu and vicinity. It's time I made an inspection tour."

They landed on Beloman on a local Rainday. As they splashed their way towards an aircar, Charles Rozdel, Brandon's Resident Superintendent, sputtered apologies. "It's politics," he said. "We get only one passenger liner a week, and we have one Rainday a week, and neither Intersteller Transport nor the Weather Control Board will make a change. I keep telling them it gives visitors the wrong idea. I personally know of some tourists who took one look at this mess and left on the ship that brought them."

Brandon grunted noncommittally. Parker clutched the violin box close to him, and hoped that it was water-proof. Rozdel loaded them into the aircar, and drove to a hotel.

An hour later Brandon pushed aside the mound of books and records and walked to the window. Beloman was almost a frontier planet, and there was a raw youthfulness about the city's broad, open-air streets and its orderly files of stubby stone buildings. Rain continued to lash against the window.

"Ever see any wood?" Brandon asked.

Rozdel shook his mind free from mining statistics. "Wood? What's that?"

Brandon concealed his disappointment. "If you don't know, there's no point in talking about it. Parker, you might as well get out and start looking around." He turned back to Rozdel. "We understood that there was once a man on this planet who gave his occupation as wood-carver. So we thought there might be some wood here. Now, about this depreciation schedule—"

"Wood-carver?" Rozdel said. "Oh, I remember now. Old Thor Peterson calls himself a wood-carver. I just never thought about it, but he makes knick-knacks and things, and—sure. Out of wood. Charges fancy prices and works mostly to order. I guess he sends the stuff to Partu. People there may have money to waste on that kind of foolishness. They don't around here."

"He's still alive, then?"

"I haven't any idea. I haven't seen him—oh, for a couple of years. He was having trouble getting around, even then. Pretty old, you know."

"I should say so!" Parker exclaimed. "Why, he must be . . ."

"Never mind," Brandon said.

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"If he's alive, we'll go see him. If he's not, we still want some wood. Where did he get the wood?"

"I haven't any idea," Rozdel said. "His relatives could probably tell you. I'll find out if he's still alive, and get directions for finding the Peterson Farm."

"Please do," Brandon said. "At once. Parker, order an aircar."

Beloman was an agriculture and mining planet, and they flew over lovely, rolling farm land and criss-crossing roads that were still maintained and used. There were occasional small forests of giant darf weeds. Soon they crossed the boundary into another weather zone, and escaped from Beloman City's Rainday into a luxury of golden sunlight. Brandon watched the landscape impatiently. "Shouldn't be long, now. Isn't that the river Rozdel mentioned?"

Parker consulted his map. "Should be. And that must be the place up ahead."

They landed in a wide circle of old but meticulously maintained stone buildings—huge barns, storage sheds, a machine shop, smaller structures housing clucking fowls or grunting animals. The stone house, a tall, square building that had suffered the addition of wings on three sides, stood in the center of the circle. As they started to walk towards it, Brandon gripped Parker's arm and halted him.

"What the devil!"

It stood near the house, a straight, rough-textured finger pointing upwards into a top-heavy crown of green foliage.

"Is it . . ."

Parker nodded. "A tree."

"I thought there wasn't a tree left in the galaxy!"

"Evidently," Parker said, "there's *one* left."

"Maybe he has more. So that's where he gets his wood. Parker, that thing must be fifteen feet high."

They moved towards it. The ground dropped away in a gentle slope, and between the house and the outbuildings were rows of stone-lined hollows.

"That's where he grows them," Brandon said. "Twenty-three, twenty-four holes. But only one tree. Well—let's go talk to the fellow."

They were met at the door by a plump young woman who greeted them politely and led them down the slope to one of the smaller outbuildings.

"Go right on in," she said, and called, "Someone to see you, father."

They entered the building. It was empty except for a bench and racks of tools at the far end. A face turned towards them, old, grotesquely wrinkled, dark under a shock of white hair. The room was dim except for the brilliantly-lighted work bench.

"Please excuse me. I cannot

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stand to greet you." The voice was a high-pitched, tremulous squeak. "My legs no longer serve me," it went on. "My voice is almost gone. My eyes and hands are not what they once were. Fortunately my appetite never fails me, and where there is appetite there is yet hope." He chuckled. "Your business, gentlemen?"

Brandon stepped forward and presented his card. The old man had been bundled into a wheeled chair with brilliantly patterned robes tucked around him. On the bench lay a piece of wood; carved on it in bold relief was the partially completed head of a woman. Brandon gaped at it.

"You come a long way, Mr. Brandon," Peterson said. "Not just to see me, surely."

"We did not expect to see you," Brandon said. "We—my secretary—found in an old book a reference to a wood-carver here."

"How old a book?"

"It was published a hundred and four years ago," Parker said.

"Ah! Then it referred to my grandfather. Or perhaps to his father. We Petersons have been wood-carvers for more generations than I could count. But I am the last. My sons have found more lofty professions. My daughters have married farmers—good farmers. They prosper. And I, I squander what is left of my talent on trinkets because my hands are no longer steady."

"I saw the tree," Brandon said. "I thought trees grew only on Earth."

"Not even there," Peterson said. "Nothing grows there now. But the Petersons have grown trees because wood-carvers must have wood. For a long time the growing of them was a family secret. When a tree was taken, there was always a new seedling ready for the pot. But no longer. I do not start new trees because I should not live long enough to use them. The one you saw is the last. When I have used it there will no longer be a woodcarver on Beloman. But you did not come so far to listen to an old man's whining."

"That may be the last tree in the entire galaxy," Brandon said.

The old man sighed. "Perhaps it is. The growing is done with chemicals, and it is a laborious and painstaking process. I have willingly told the secret to many, but no ones cares to bother. And why should anyone go to such trouble if there is no wood-carver to use the wood?"

Brandon took the box from Parker, and opened it. "This is why I am here," he said.

The white, deeply-veined hands lifted out the violin. Eyes gleaming with excitement, Peterson held it up to the light, turned it over and over. "Beautiful!" he whispered. "Beautiful! What is it?"

"A violin," Brandon said. "A musical instrument."

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"Ah! They were real craftsmen in those days. They were real musicians, too." He beamed at Brandon. "I thank you for showing this to me. It is difficult for me to travel, but I should have gone far to see it. Beautiful!"

"I want you to fix it," Brandon said.

The smile faded. Peterson squinted at the hole, fingered it expertly. "Why?"

"Why—" Brandon stared at him. "—because I want it fixed. Here, we have a picture of what it looked like. I want to learn to play it."

Peterson looked from picture to violin. Slowly he shook his head. With a final caress he returned the instrument to its box. "No," he said. "I'm sorry, but—no."

"But why not? Wood is your business, isn't it?"

"My grandfather had a musical instrument," Peterson said. "A flute. He would go out into the fields to play. The animals would come listen to him. I saw them myself. He made beautiful music. Then he died. The flute became mine, and I tried to play it. I made some sounds, but I could not make music. The music died with the musician."

"What happened to the flute?" Brandon asked, with a sudden vision of an entire collection of rare and priceless musical instruments.

"I buried it," Peterson said. "It was an old, old instrument—like this violin. The secret of making music passed from owner to owner until my grandfather could find no one who wished to learn. When he died its music died also. So is the music of this violin dead." He tapped the box gently. "Bury it," he said.

"Nonsense!" Brandon said. "It's a beautiful thing. You said so yourself. What's the harm in having it fixed, even if no one can play it?"

"Would you ask a doctor to heal a dead man? No. He could patch him, perhaps, but he could not heal. I would heal your violin gladly if I could make it speak again. But I cannot heal, so I will not patch. Bury it."

"I'll pay well," Brandon said. "You have wood. You have the skill. It shouldn't take long."

"Too long," the cracked voice said. "Forever, and even then I could not heal it. But I would not expect you to understand. The music—the old music—was not like the music we have now. We have musical machines, and they are soulless. The old music—I know this, because I heard my grandfather play." Carefully he closed the box. "I'm sorry you have come so far for nothing."

"Do you know of someone else who could fix it?"

Peterson shook his head. "There is only me. Soon I shall die, and then there will be no one."

Brandon squared his shoulders, thrust his head forward, said

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sternly, "I don't think you fully understand who I am. Even on this obscure little planet . . ."

"You are a man with a dead violin, and I cannot help you." Peterson turned back to his bench, and picked up a tool.

"Come on," Brandon said. He did not speak again until they were almost back at Beloman City. Then he growled, "Conceited old fossil. I'll show him whether he's the only one."

On the glistening, cosmopolitan world of Partu, Brandon inspected factories, attended board meetings, made speeches, and bought wood. The indefatigable Parker scored one coup after another in tracking down owners of Thor Peterson's carvings—or those of his father, or grandfather, or of even more remote Petersons beyond number. There were wood boxes of all sizes, with carved lids. There were impressively-carved wood figurines. There were wall plaques, and sets of wood dishes, and carved serving bowls. There were even wood clocks that set in motion an entire parade of wood figures around their exteriors.

The list grew in length and variety. Brandon had no difficulty in acquiring the simpler items. Such things had always been for sale on Partu, and the Partusians evidently thought that they always would be. Brandon brought, or graciously accepted gifts, and kept to himself his knowledge of the crippled old man and the one remaining tree.

The more elaborate objects, such as the clocks, were often family heirlooms, but Brandon had money, influence and the gift of persuasion, and he applied all three generously or ruthlessly, as the case required. In a matter of days he had the greatest collection of wood in the known galaxy, a collection that would turn Harry Morrison livid with envy. He had also, by promise of a nice bonus to Thor Peterson's agent on Partu, arranged to acquire the entire future output of the old man.

"Now we can go home," he said jovially to Parker, "and fix this violin."

Brandon sifted through his collection and reluctantly assented to the sacrifice of one small wood box. The Polivar technician took charge of it, disassembled it, and began to experiment, to learn to work with wood. He cut pieces, he pared them to the desired thickness, he shaped and glued them.

Days passed. Brandon contained his impatience and encouraged the man to take his time. He wanted nothing less than perfection on this job.

Finally the technician was ready. He searched through Brandon's entire collection for the piece that best matched the delicate grain of the violin. He scraped

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it, raising a pile of fine shavings that Brandon contemplated sadly and ordered impounded. He could think of no use for them, but they were, undeniably, wood. With surgical precision the technician evened the splintered edges of the hole. With surgical precision he cut the patch, and glued it into place.

It did not hold.

Brandon's disappointment was tempered by the arrival of a shipment of carvings from Peterson's agent on Partu: a small plaque, the one the old man had been working on when they visited him, and a pair of boxes with simple ornaments carved on the lids. Brandon inspected them critically, and pronounced them inferior. He slapped his technician on the back. "He's second-best now," he exulted. "Let's get on with it."

The technician tried a second time, and a third. Then, with ingenuity and patience, he secured the patch with braces on the inside of the instrument. It held. Gleefully Brandon called in one of his chemists, and ordered him to duplicate the violin's glossy finish on the patch. The grumbling chemist retired with fragments left over from the technician's experiments. His work took time, and the task so tried his temper that he was even snarling at Brandon before it was done with. But in the end he produced a finish not remotely unlike the original.

"Now," Brandon said, "we're getting somewhere."

In consultation with Professor Weltz, Brandon and his technician studied the picture of the violin. They identified the bridge and the pegs, and the technician carved them. They identified the finger board. Brandon was reluctant to sacrifice an object that could produce so large a piece of wood, so they decided to compromise on one made of plastic. The finger board was, Professor Weltz assured him, in no way functional, and its substance could not affect the sound.

The string holder posed a problem, since the violinist's arm hid that part of the instrument in the picture. The ingenious technician attached a small bar around which the strings could be looped. The substance of the strings was the most perplexing riddle of all, and Professor Weltz finally solved it after an intensive study of the meaning of the word *string* down through the centuries. He recommended the use of a certain type of fiber that Brandon had never heard of.

Brandon ordered the fiber—yards of it. The technician cut off lengths and attached them to the violin. Brandon extended a finger, plucked at a string. The violin emitted a soft, but recognizably musical, *plunk*.

"We did it!" Brandon roared.

Professor Weltz demonstrated

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the use of the pegs to tune the strings. He showed Brandon how the placing of fingers on the strings would alter the pitch. In a week Brandon could plunk his way through a simple tune and make it recognizable. In two weeks he had acquired a commendable facility.

"Now, about this rod the player holds in the other hand," Professor Weltz said.

"Hang the rod," Brandon said. "I'm playing music. What more can you expect of a musical instrument?"

Morrison came, admired, and glumly departed with downcast shoulders after being conducted through Brandon's wood display. The exultant Brandon waxed joyfully for another week, and then a second shipment arrived from Partu. Cut in relief on one of the half-dozen carved boxes was a perfectly-executed image of a violin.

"Damn the man!" Brandon muttered.

He could envision old Thor Peterson bent over his work bench, producing this flawless carving from memory, smugly secure in the knowledge that he was the only man in the universe who could work with wood. Brandon sprang to his feet and paced restlessly about his office. He returned to his desk and consulted his engagement calendar. He summoned Parker.

"We're going to Beloman."

The usually imperturbable Parker was startled. "Again?"

"Make the arrangements," Brandon said. "I can leave day after tomorrow."

Again they flew out of a bedrenched Beloman City Rainday into the warming cheer of bright sunlight. Ripening fields of grain swayed peacefully far below them. Brandon twisted this way and that, looking about impatiently for landmarks. They passed over the rushing river, and landed again in the circle of farm buildings. Brandon leaped out, and Parker followed cautiously with the violin.

"The tree's gone," Parker said.

"He said he was about ready to use it," Brandon said.

They headed directly for the workshop, and Brandon had his hand on the door when a call stopped him. The young woman they had met on the first visit hurried towards them.

"What was it you wanted?" she asked.

"We'd like to see Mr. Peterson," Brandon said.

"I'm sorry. Father is dead. He died a month ago."

Brandon could manage no more than a deep breath.

"I'm sorry," the woman said again.

"I'm sorry, too," Brandon said.

They turned away. Slowly they walked back to the aircar. Slowly they flew away.

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Brandon touched Parker's arm. "Let's set down somewhere," he said. "I want to think."

Parker landed in a rolling meadow near the shallow gorge of the river. Brandon, the violin box under his arm, walked over and seated himself where he could look down at the gurgling, leaping water.

The face of old Thor Peterson loomed before him in perfect clarity—the white hair, the deep wrinkles, the sunken, sadly meditative eyes.

"The music of this violin is dead."

Brandon opened the box, and touched a string. Plunk.

"My grandfather had a musical instrument. A flute. He would go out into the fields to play. The animals would come listen to him."

Plunk.

"The music died with the musician."

Plunk.

Inside the violin, the faded label: "Jacob Raymann At Ye Bell House, Southmark, London, 1688." Nearly a thousand years. Centuries, at least, of great, stirring music. Plunk.

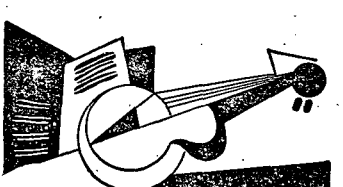
In a sudden, intuitive vision Brandon heard music: heard a soaring, throbbing lament as a single, bewitching thread of melody was spun out of nowhere with breath-taking, limpid sweetness; heard an incomprehensible blur of notes, a lightning rapidity of tonal movement, a darting, deadly, soulfully expressive rapier of glittering sound.

And saw an audience, audience of thousands, rapt, choked with emotion.

Plunk.

Brandon leaned out over the river and dropped the violin. He watched hypnotically as it spun downwards, ignoring Parker's cry of horror. It struck with a faint splash, and to his amazement it floated. For a moment it bobbed lightly upon the rushing, tossing water. Then it plunged into a rapids, struck a rock, and another, and disappeared in a shower of spray and splinters.

Brandon turned away. Again he fancied that he heard music, but this time it was only the subdued murmur of the river below, and the sibilant hiss of a hot wind searching the dry meadow grass.



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The Long Island Railroad had suspended service for one of its frequent periods of fasting, meditation, and prayer, so an interview was cancelled and a letter substituted for it. "Dear Mr. Pettifogle [it went], I've been a groom, riding instructor, Flamenco dancer, pegger on a lobster boat & cook on a tuna boat, receptionist, file clerk, & amateur dog handler. I'm now living with my family on Long Island and breeding Laborador retrievers and Akitas. The Akita is the royal dog of Japan, and should be better known in this country. Most sincerely." Also better known in this country—and now, we modestly trust, will—should be the author of that letter and this weird and funny story of birds, not all of whom live in gilded cages.

WINGED VICTORY

by S. Dorman

WHILE HE WAS HAVING A FEW drinks at a bar, Drake sensed the sad, predatory face looking in at him, and ran out, but it was too late. That was the sort of luck he'd expected: almost meeting his pursuer face to face only to have him fly off down the cobblestones with a flap of hunched black and a flitter of gold eye. When Drake looked up, an owl was observing him. It sat on the hood of a streetlight, looking weary.

"Good night, owl," he said angrily.

"Nobody," said the owl in return.

"Who?"

The owl repeated, "Nobody."

"If you aren't the one!" exclaimed a woman. She had come out of the bar behind Drake and was curious about his conversation. "Talking to a bird," she said in a chipper voice. "If I had one, I'd keep it in a cage, properly."

"A parakeet, no doubt," Drake said bitterly. "One of them little green lady kind of birds. I don't like things in cages, anyhow."

"None of us does," she agreed, falling into step beside him.

Drake cocked his head drunkenly at her. "Then why keep—?"

"It's human nature."

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He looked away down the street, but could see no sign of the conventional black symbol he had hoped to escape and yet longed to encounter and demolish, so his future was still unsafe. "It's all just nature," he grumbled. "If I can catch him, I'll get him off my tail for good."

"Not used to being evaded, are you?" she inquired, smiling at him. She wore a green coat and no hat. In the poor light her hair appeared feathery pale and her features were indistinct.

"I've evaded him, so far," Drake said. "I haven't fallen for his tricks yet. If I can find him first, I'll swoop down on him when he isn't looking, and that'll be that. But he's always waiting around for me."

"Yes, yes," she said soothingly, "all the world's a cage, and we're in it together."

"Crap," Drake said. "That's crap."

"Absolutely," she agreed.

By this time they had come to the Avenue where there was more traffic. A bus snorted around the corner like a metal bull, and a movie house had just emptied out its customers who were streaming across the Avenue toward the only open soda fountain in the block.

Behind the neon-green door of the soda place something caught Drake's eye; a billow of black which looked familiar. Leaving the woman to stand there, he hopped off the curb, just missed being hit by a newspaper truck, and ran across the Avenue and whammed the door open. Several magazines fell off the rack inside as he passed.

"Mr. Cyclone," the soda jerk said in disgust, coming around to pick up the magazines. Nobody else noticed him. There was no one there he recognized. A few men, a few women, and two kids who ought to be home in bed at this hour but were drinking something sticky and giggling into each other's faces. A whole bunch of alien idiots.

"Seeds!" Drake swore in some other language. "Gimme some Sweeties," he said to the soda jerk, ringing his money down. He put one of the candies in his mouth, crunching hard on the dry lichen concentrate. A Sweet was supposed to sober him up, but it didn't.

Then he saw himself in the mirror behind the fountain. Above a bruised beak rose his ruffled crest. His left sleeve was torn and dirty, and the wing was damn near crippled, though it only felt numb. Now where did I get that bad? he asked himself, shocked. He went out into the street again, asking himself, How did I get so messed up? There wasn't much of a brawl in that bar, or was there?

"Just nature," she said cheerfully, falling into step beside him

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again. "You know, the female likes to cook and keep house, the male likes to hunt and compete."

"That's crap," Drake said, but he looked at her sharply, since she was singing a song his mother had taught him. Much good his look did; they were moving through a darker area of the city and he couldn't tell what she was like: ugly, old, pretty, hungry, or what. Just his bad luck, with an ignominious end in the near future, a half-drunk on to destroy his caution, and nothing in his pockets but a package of Sweeties.

"Have one," he said grimly, offering the little box to her.

"No thank you," she said politely. "I don't need one."

"How far are you going to walk with me?"

"Oh, as far as you like. I'm in no hurry."

He tucked the bedraggled wing closer to his side and stamped along with her. His shoes were a recent gift, and as he wasn't used to wearing them, they were raising blisters. "Lime," he muttered, in another tongue. The fresh night air was not steadying him, and with only one wing he was at a disadvantage.

"Homesick?" she asked.

"Never!" Drake swore. "I been every place, done every thing, seen all the rocks and clouds, and I forget what home was. Nothing but a cracked egg, anyway."

"You can say that again," the woman murmured. "I'm not homesick, either. I hated it, always cooped up—"

"You?" he asked cynically.

"Like I said, always cooped up. My Daddy's an old buzzard. After he left home I thought things would be livelier, but he got too old to be the town collector, and came back to us, and now here I am with aged parents on my hands, and nothing to amuse me, much."

Drake looked sideways at her, blearily, and wished he could see her more clearly. They had turned off into an airier part of town where some of the houses were covered with vines. The vines were quiet at this hour of the night, but Drake listened to them anyway, becoming more and more uneasy. Yet here she was at his side, and why not? Maybe it was better if he didn't see her too clearly. She suddenly burst into song that made him feel worse yet, not being in his vocal range. He stumped along, wishing he would sober up, and she warbled away.

Drake suddenly thought he saw the flap of a black salute from a doorway, and all caution gone, he plunged over for a better look. In his blistering shoes he staggered up fourteen rungs to the entry, off balance with the unfamiliar liquors and his damaged wing. The door was shut tight and only a pale glow showed behind the panes. He gave an ugly squawk of

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rage and frustration, just drunk enough still to be sure he could tear that flapping black idiot into pieces.

She came noiselessly along behind him and took a key out of her bag before he realized she was there.

"Hey, you live here?" Drake asked in alarm, trying to back off. She had sort of jammed him into the entry while she unlocked the door. "I'll be going," Drake said, knowing too late he had flown right into the trap.

"Oh no you won't," she said in a tone of perfect fury. "Not a chance, my fine feathered friend."

Drake cracked his beak on the woodwork as he tried to get away, but the door opened inward. The woman gave him a shove and her old mother was right there waiting, and clapped a grille over him.

"Ha!" the old mother shouted. "You've got one!"

"Not much to look at," she said, switching on some lights. "But he can be cleaned up and he's what Daddy suggested. I won't push my luck."

There in a deep chair by the stove sat his adversary with a lap full of bones and his big black shoulders hunched. In a rich voice he said, "Well, well. Good evening."

"Good evening," Drake said dismally. "I don't call it a fair fight."

"Fight? My dear boy, don't you mean flight? Anyway, your own instincts led you here, you know it."

"You old buzzard," Drake croaked.

"Tut!" her Daddy said. "Careful! I'll have my eye on you."

Drake drooped against the bars and sighed. The woman was being adorned with shells and flowers by her mother; there was a crackling cosiness about the whole little nest. His worst dreams come true; the end of his wild migrations.

"Done for," Drake said in his own language.

Bright-eyed and beady, the little woman smiled at him. "Just beginning," she clacked.

Her mother came over and unlocked the grille. "Eggs!" she prophesied, and began to preen him with her shriveled talons.

NEXT MONTH . . .

THE TREE OF TIME, part one of a thrilling two part novel by DAMON KNIGHT

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BOOKS

THE BEAST, **A. E. van Vogt**, Doubleday, $3.50

I have not been altogether pleased that recently, so it seems, nonfiction has outnumbered fiction in this column, and that some of the latter has been only marginally Science Fiction or Fantasy. However, complaints have been minimal, and I suppose that most of you would rather read a review of a good book on nematodes than a bad one on the Space-Raiders of Xilch. Still, I hope to correct this imbalance eventually, and without cluttering things up with tripe stf.

This by way of introduction and explanation. . . . Nothing kept me at THE BEAST except that it was straight SF, of which the column's been short—*and* the fact that it's by the great A. E. van Vogt. Surely (I kept telling myself), surely any minute now things will start getting good. Surely paper characters, cliché situations, poor writing, flapdoodle and flumadiddle about Mysterious Super Engines, Secret Mysterious Organizations, Super Mysterious Powers, Mysterious Secret Caves in the Moon, Secret Super Communist Nazis, Super Secret Mysterious Neanderthal —surely all this must momentarily give way to the Great van Vogtian Stimulating Concepts for which SLAN, THE WORLD OF NULL-A, THE WEAPONS-SHOPS OF ISHAR, were famous . . . surely? Well, give way it did—for a while—but only to make room for Super Mysterious Equalized Man-Like Women, Mysterious Super Intelligent Arc-lights Living in a Pit, Secret Super Kidnapping Colonies on Venus—

But why go on. Apparently this collection of rubbish has been confected out of three stories originally published in *Astounding*, the dates of which are meretriciously not given, but I'd guess not long after the War, with perhaps the dates recently re-set later to bring it (ha ha) up to date; which, if I'm correct, failed miserably in its intention: and, if I'm wrong, merely convicts van Vogt of here being a poor prophet as well as (here) a poor writer. The only redeeming features of the book are good paper, clear typography, an arresting jacket design by How-

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ard Burns. In short, I feel quite savage about having wasted on it an entire evening which I might much better have spent bubbling my lips for the amusement of my little boy. And henceforth as previously I shall continue to favor good books on nematodes.

YEARBOOK OF ASTRONOMY, 1963, **J. G. Porter** and **Patrick Moore**, Norton, $3.50

Most of the charts, diagrams, and other such technical data here refer to countries in the latitude of Great Britain, where the book was prepared. However, it is also full of interesting information which will appeal even to non-astronomy-buffs living elsewhere. There are articles on telescope eyepieces, Mars, space research, observing the sun, variable stars, meteorites and life, Venus, making your own observatory, stellar clusters, career astronomy, etc.; as well as fascinating tid-bits about Our Changing Constellations.

THE COMPLETE PROPHECIES OF NOSTRADAMUS, **Henry C. Roberts**, Nostradamus, Inc. $5.

Mr. Roberts owns an old book shop on Canal Street in NYC, into which I wandered some years ago, looking for bound volumes of the *American Weekly* from the days when A. Merrit was editing it. I didn't get them, but I got two remarkable statements from the proprietor. "Some years ago I bought up all the old WPA Federal Art project paintings for the price of the canvas. I am reputed to have made a quarter of a million dollars on the deal, which I neither affirm nor deny. I did make enough to print my Nostradamus book," he said; adding, calmly, "I am widely recognized to be a reincarnation of Nostradamus."

The second edition is now out —"Translated, Edited, and Interpreted" by himself—and claims to be the first edition in English since 1672. There is a turgid preface attributed to Nostradamus, discoursing on his powers; most of the prophetic quatrains in 16th c. French, a translation, and a comment on each. Mr. Roberts, I fear, takes liberties with his text—perhaps the privilege of a reincarnated author. In Quatrain 9, Century I, for example—there are many such examples—*De l'orient viendra le coeur punique* does not mean "From the East of Africa shall come the Lion-Heart." The words *of Africa* are visibly absent; *punique* means Punic, not Lion; whatever the line signifies (if anything), it doesn't signify Haile Selassie, which is what Roberts says it does in order to justify the next line about angering "the heirs of Romulus." To extend (Q. 12, C.I) *Qui de Verone aura gouvernment* to the government, not

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only to Verona, but all Italy, and apply it to Mussolini, is fetching far indeed. Most of the fame of Michel de Nôtre-Dame rests on three prophecies: Q. 35, C.I, *The young Lion small overcome the old one/ In martial field by single* [or, singular] *duel, /In a golden cage he shall put out his eye/ . . . then he shall die . . .* may be applied without strain to the death at jousting of Henry II of France, whose golden helmet was pierced at the eye. Q. 20, C. IX, ending *. . . dedans Varennes, / Esleu cap. cause tempeste, feu, sang tranche,* is certainly strongly suggestive of the capture of Louis XVI at Varennes—which certainly did "cause tempest, fire, blood running"—although Mr. Roberts curiously neglects to translate "Esleu cap." as *Elected Capet.* Ah, well. The third, Q. 18, C. IX, said to contain the very name of Monto Morency's executioner, escapes him entirely.

Most of these verses seem gibberish; most of the "interpretations" were plainly done during World War II, and are forced and unconvincing in their attempts to read then-current events into them. And anyone who can understand "The leader, escaping, shall be safe in a barn on the sea" (whatever the Hell *that* means) as referring to der Feuhrer's "escaping in a submarine" can understand anything as referring to anything. This book has no value to serious students of the prophetic phenomenon, except that anyone who wants (almost) all of Nostradamus in English will find this the only game in town; publisher's address is 380 Canal St., NYC 13, and don't say I didn't warn you.

THE DOOR TO THE FUTURE, **Jess Stearn,** Doubleday, $4.50

I said of the Roberts edition of Nostradamus that it was of little or no value to serious students of the prophetic phenomena. Mr. Stearn's book, I think, may be of some such interest; it is thoroughly a "popular" book, of course, and marred throughout by the author's addiction to journalese (Mr. Jones, for instance, is never startled: he is "a startled Mr. Jones": to distinguish him, I suppose, from the many non-startled Mr. Joneses) but it makes a fairly wide survey of (mostly) modern "psychic" phenomena, from Edgar Cayce, who diagnosed and prescribed when in trance, through the Washington clairvoyante Jean Dixon, to the Fatima messages, via astrology and spiritualism, etc., with backward glances at the Bible, Nostradamus, and Mother Shipton. The only one which Mr. Stearn discredits absolutely is Mother Shipton, whose "prophecies" of submarines and aircraft were forgeries of the mid-19th century. His attitude towards the

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"fulfillment" of the prophecies of the "Old" Testament in the "New" is so uncritical that I am led to suspect his testimony on other points. The book can be recommended to those eager to believe everything, and to those interested in seeing what is believed by those eager to believe everything.

PENELOPE, Wm. C. Anderson, Crown, $3.95

This is supposed to be a funny book about a dolphin. It seems, anyway, to be a book about a dolphin. Tom O'Sullivan's jacket design is nice.

A LIKENESS TO VOICES, Mary Savage, Torquil, $3.50

This is blurbed as "a tale of modern witchcraft involving one of the most trouble-prone cats ever to survive 2,000 life cycles," and I quit reading it when I discovered that part of it is written by the *cat,* for pity's sake. I do not review books written by cats. I would have mentioned this when I applied for the job, but I did not suppose the matter would ever come up. Cute cover by Si Coleman.

THE HISTORIE OF THE DAMNABLE LIFE AND DESERVED DEATH OF DOCTOR JOHN FAUSTUS, William Rose, ed., U. of Notre Dame Press, $1.95

"To the end that this miserable Faustus might fill the lust of his flesh, and live in all manner of voluptuous pleasures, it came in his mind . . . that he had a great desire to lie with fair Helena of Greece . . . wherefore he called unto him his spirit Mephostophiles, commanding him to bring him the fair Helena, which he also did. Whereupon he fell in love with her, and made her his common Concubine and bedfellow, for she was so beautiful and delightful a piece, that he could not be one hour from her, if he should therefore have suffered death, she had so stolen away his heart: and to his seeming, in time she was with child, and in the end brought him a man child, whom Faustus named Justus Faustus: this child told Dr. Faustus many things that were to come, and what strange matters were done in foreign countries: but in the end when Faustus lost his life, the mother and the child vanished away both together."

Out of such rough material Marlowe and Schiller wrought their wondrous stories, which have made the Faust Legend the common property of mankind. This book is "modernized" from the first translation into English, in 1952, when some who had known Faust were still alive. It is full of all sorts of anecdotes, sorcery, sermons, practical jokes, and much later illustrations. Dr. Wm.

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Rose of the University of London and Professor W. K. Pfeiler of the University of Nebraska have contributed interesting and valuable material to the book, but to me the most fascinating is the frontispiece labeled, "An Alleged Faust Portrait / By Jan Joris Van-Vliet / After a Sketch by Rembrandt. About 1630." It is a picture of an old man, conveying, I don't know how, the distinct first impression of a *little* old man. The second impression is of bitterness, pain, and abstraction. Look further and the lips seem about to writhe back and the whole face convulse in a frightful grimace. Could one but see plain that which but now lurks, it would not be hard to believe that this face did indeed gaze long into the countenance of the Prince of Hell.

—AVRAM DAVIDSON

LOST TRIBES & SUNKEN CONTINENTS
(Myth and Method in the Study of American Indians), **Robert Wauchope**, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, $3.95

Some questions irresistibly attract pseudoscientific cultists. Questions of the origin of races, peoples, and civilizations are especially beguiling. Hence the host of writings, theories, and cults associated with Atlantism, Pyramidology, Neodruidism, Diffusionism, and British-Israelism among others.

Prominent among these controversies is that surrounding the origin of the American Indians. There have been doctrines of Atlantean Indians, Egyptian Indians, Jewish Indians, Phoenician Indians, Negro Indians, Norse Indians, Welsh Indians, Polynesian Indians, Greek Indians, Sumerian Indians, Mormon Indians, and Buddhist Indians.

Anthropologists archeologists, and historians know that these theories are one-tenth doubtful and nine-tenths nonsense. But the average academician is ill-equipped to combat such delusions. He writes in a Latinized professorese style that repels the reading public. He has his own work, and if he tried to swat every screwball theory that buzzes round his head he would have no time left. Worst of all, he finds that much of the public emotionally prefers the cultist notions regardless of evidence. As Wauchope, alluding to Heyerdahl's Pacific-migration theories, says: "If there is anything an avid adventure reader hates, it is an egghead scholar who primly pours a test tube of cold water on an already brine-soaked blond Viking hero who conquered the roaring Pacific to demonstrate his faith in a dramatic theory when the spectacled scientists said it couldn't be done."

Fortunately, a few heroic eggheads persist in setting the record

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straight. Professor Wauchope of Tulane University, a Mayologist and Americanist, is the latest. With wry humor he parades the whole bizarre cortège, from López de Gomara, who around 1500 launched the Lost Ten Tribes theory of the Amerinds, down to Gladwin and Heyerdahl. If such things interest you, the book is well worth your while.

—L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP

NOTE:—From time to time and perhaps even regularly we will note the publication of books not reviewed but which we think may be of interest to readers. Comprehensive, no—comprehensible, yes.

FICTION

Bulmer, Ken. *The Wizard of Poseidon.* Ace Double Novel. $.40
Burroughs, Edgar Rice. *Jungle Tales of Tarzan, Tarzan and the City of Gold.* Ace. $.40 each.
Hatch, Gerald. *The Day The Earth Froze.* Monarch. $.35
Kline, Otis Adelbert. *Planet of Peril.* Ace. $.40
Lukens, Adam. *Alien World.* Bouregy (Avalon). $2.95
Merril, Judith. The Year's Best S-F, 7th annual. Dell. $.75
Moskowitz, Sam. *The Coming of the Robots* (anthology). Collier. $.95
Norton, Andre. *The Stars Are Out!* Ace, $.40
Serling, Rod. *Rod Serling's Triple-W: Witches, Warlocks, and Werewolves.* Bantam, $.40
Spector, Robert D. *Seven Masterpieces of Gothic Horror* (anthology). Bantam. $.40
Spicer, Dorothy G. *13 Witches, 2 Wizards, the Devil, and a Pack of Goblins.* (anthology). Coward, $3.50
Sutton, Jeff. *The Atom Conspiracy.* Bouregy (Avalon). $2.95
Thomas, W. Jenkyn. *More Welsh Fairy and Folk Tales.* U. of Wales Press. Defour. $2.50

NON-FICTION

American Astronautical Society. *Advances in the Astronautical Sciences,* v. 10. Western Periodicals. $11.50
Anderson, Poul. *Is There Life On Other Worlds?* Crowell-Collier. $4.95
Bergwin, Clyde R. and W. T. Coleman. *Animal Astronauts.* Prentice. $3.95
Caidin, Martin. *The Moon: New World For Men.* Bobbs. $5.95
Eriksen, C. T. *Rockets and Missiles.* SportShelf. $1.00
Gamow, George A. *A Planet Called Earth.* Viking. $5.75
Letbridge, Thomas C. *Witches.* Routledge and Paul (Humanities). $4.50
Ley, Willy. *Harnessing Space.* Macmillan. $5.95
Superintendant of Documents of the U.S. *Space Science and Technical Books, 1957-1961: A Bibliography with Contents Noted.* Washington 25, D.C., $1.00
Sutton, George. *Rocket Propulsion Elements.* Wiley. $10.50
Street, P.A.R. *Vanishing Animals.* Dutton. $4.50
Wiig, Nic. *The Preoperative Clinical Diagnosis of Lumbar Disc Prolapse.* F.A.Davis. $3.75

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Beneath the sunny surface of Mr. Ray Nelson's personality lies an abiding suspicion of many features of our society, the product of several thousand years of human civilization; and this suspicion finds expression in his stories. "I think we are property," observed the late Charles Fort, and to George Nada came this same revelation when—Lovers of good old-fashioned horror stories will relish this good new-fashioned one. You may never trust your television again.

EIGHT O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING

by Ray Nelson

AT THE END OF THE SHOW THE hypnotist told his subjects, "Awake."

Something unusual happened.

One of the subjects awoke all the way. This had never happened before. His name was George Nada and he blinked out at the sea of faces in the theatre, at first unaware of anything out of the ordinary. Then he noticed, spotted here and there in the crowd, the non-human faces, the faces of the Fascinators. They had been there all along, of course, but only George was really awake, so only George recognized them for what they were. He understood everything in a flash, including the fact that if he were to give any outward sign, the Fascinators would instantly command him to return to his former state, and he would obey.

He left the theatre, pushing out into the neon night, carefully avoiding giving any indication that he saw the green, reptilian flesh or the multiple yellow eyes of the rulers of earth. One of them asked him, "Got a light buddy?" George gave him a light, then moved on.

At intervals along the street George saw the posters hanging with photographs of the Fascinators' multiple eyes and various commands printed under them, such as, "Work eight hours, play eight hours, sleep eight hours,"

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and "Marry and Reproduce." A TV set in the window of a store caught George's eye, but he looked away in the nick of time. When he didn't look at the Fascinator in the screen, he could resist the command, "Stay tuned to this station."

George lived alone in a little sleeping room, and as soon as he got home, the first thing he did was to disconnect the TV set. In other rooms he could hear the TV sets of his neighbors, though. Most of the time the voices were human, but now and then he heard the arrogant, strangely bird-like croaks of the aliens. "Obey the government," said one croak. "We are the government," said another. "We are your friends, you'd do anything for a friend, wouldn't you?"

"Obey!"

"Work!"

Suddenly the phone rang.

George picked it up. It was one of the Fascinators.

"Hello," it squawked. "This is your control, Chief of Police Robinson. You are an old man, George Nada. Tomorrow morning at eight o'clock, your heart will stop. Please repeat."

"I am an old man," said George. "Tomorrow morning at eight o'clock, my heart will stop."

The control hung up.

"No, it won't," whispered George. He wondered why they wanted him dead. Did they suspect that he was awake? Probably. Someone might have spotted him, noticed that he didn't respond the way the others did. If George were alive at one minute after eight tomorrow morning, then they would be sure.

"No use waiting here for the end," he thought.

He went out again. The posters, the TV, the occasional commands from passing aliens did not seem to have absolute power over him, though he still felt strongly tempted to obey, to see these things the way his master wanted him to see them. He passed an alley and stopped. One of the aliens was alone there, leaning against the wall. George walked up to him.

"Move on," grunted the thing, focusing his deadly eyes on George.

George felt his grasp on awareness waver. For a moment the reptilian head dissolved into the face of a lovable old drunk. Of course the drunk would be lovable. George picked up a brick and smashed it down on the old drunk's head with all his strength. For a moment the image blurred, then the bluegreen blood oozed out of the face and the lizard fell, twitching and writhing. After a moment it was dead.

George dragged the body into the shadows and searched it. There was a tiny radio in its pocket and a curiously shaped knife and fork in another. The tiny radio said something in an incom-

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prehensible language. George put it down beside the body, but kept the eating utensils.

"I can't possibly escape," thought George. "Why fight them?"

But maybe he could.

What if he could awaken others? That might be worth a try.

He walked twelve blocks to the apartment of his girl friend, Lil, and knocked on her door. She came to the door in her bathrobe.

"I want you to wake up," he said.

"I'm awake," she said. "Come on in."

He went in. The TV was playing. He turned it off.

"No," he said. "I mean really wake up." She looked at him without comprehension, so he snapped his fingers and shouted, *"Wake up*! The masters command that you wake up!"

"Are you off your rocker, George?" she asked suspiciously. "You sure are acting funny." He slapped her face. "'Cut that out!" she cried, "What the hell are you up to anyway?"

"Nothing," said George, defeated. "I was just kidding around."

"Slapping my face wasn't just kidding around!" she cried.

There was a knock at the door.

George opened it.

It was one of the aliens.

"Can't you keep the noise down to a dull roar?" it said.

The eyes and reptilian flesh faded a little and George saw the flickering image of a fat middle-aged man in shirtsleeves. It was still a man when George slashed its throat with the eating knife, but it was an alien before it hit the floor. He dragged it into the apartment and kicked the door shut.

"What do you see there?" he asked Lil, pointing to the many-eyed snake thing on the floor.

"Mister . . . Mister Coney," she whispered, her eyes wide with horror. "You . . . just killed him, like it was nothing at all."

"Don't scream," warned George, advancing on her.

"I won't George. I swear I won't, only please, for the love of God, put down that knife." She backed away until she had her shoulder blades pressed to the wall.

George saw that it was no use.

"I'm going to tie you up," said George. "First tell me which room Mister Coney lived in."

"The first door on your left as you go toward the stairs," she said. "Georgie . . . Georgie. Don't torture me. If you're going to kill me, do it clean. Please, Georgie, please."

He tied her up with bedsheets and gagged her, then searched the body of the Fascinator. There was another one of the little radios that talked a foreign language, another set of eating utensils, and nothing else.

George went next door.

When he knocked, one of the

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snake-things answered, "Who is it?"

"Friend of Mister Coney. I wanna see him," said George.

"He went out for a second, but he'll be right back." The door opened a crack, and four yellow eyes peeped out. "You wanna come in and wait?"

"Okay," said George, not looking at the eyes.

"You alone here?" he asked, as it closed the door, its back to George.

"Yeah, why?"

He slit its throat from behind, then searched the apartment.

He found human bones and skulls, a half-eaten hand.

He found tanks with huge fat slugs floating in them.

"The children," he thought, and killed them all.

There were guns too, of a sort he had never seen before. He discharged one by accident, but fortunately it was noiseless. It seemed to fire little poisoned darts.

He pocketed the gun and as many boxes of darts as he could and went back to Lil's place. When she saw him she writhed in helpless terror.

"Relax, honey," he said, opening her purse, "I just want to borrow your car keys."

He took the keys and went downstairs to the street.

Her car was still parked in the same general area in which she always parked it. He recognized it by the dent in the right fender. He got in, started it, and began driving aimlessly. He drove for hours, thinking—desperately searching for some way out. He turned on the car radio to see if he could get some music, but there was nothing but news and it was all about him, George Nada, the homicidal maniac. The announcer was one of the masters, but he sounded a little scared. Why should he be? What could one man do?

George wasn't surprised when he saw the road block, and he turned off on a side street before he reached it. No little trip to the country for you, Georgie boy, he thought to himself.

They had just discovered what he had done back at Lil's place, so they would probably be looking for Lil's car. He parked it in an alley and took the subway. There were no aliens on the subway, for some reason. Maybe they were too good for such things, or maybe it was just because it was so late at night.

When one finally did get on, George got off.

He went up to the street and went into a bar. One of the Fascinators was on the TV, saying over and over again, "We are your friends. We are your friends. We are your friends." The stupid lizard sounded scared. Why? What could one man do against all of them?

George ordered a beer, then it

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suddenly struck him that the Fascinator on the TV no longer seemed to have any power over him. He looked at it again and thought, "It has to believe it can master me to do it. The slightest hint of fear on its part and the power to hypnotize is lost." They flashed George's picture on the TV screen and George retreated to the phone booth. He called his control, the Chief of Police.

"Hello, Robinson?" he asked.

"Speaking."

"This is George Nada. I've figured out how to wake people up."

"What? George, hang on. Where are you?" Robinson sounded almost hysterical.

He hung up and paid and left the bar. They would probably trace his call.

He caught another subway and went downtown.

It was dawn when he entered the building housing the biggest of the city's TV studios. He consulted the building directory and then went up in the elevator. The cop in front of the studio entrance recognized him. "Why, you're Nada!" he gasped.

George didn't like to shoot him with the poison dart gun, but he had to.

He had to kill several more before he got into the studio itself, including all the engineers on duty. There were a lot of police sirens outside, excited shouts, and running footsteps on the stairs. The alien was sitting before the TV camera saying, "We are your friends. We are your friends," and didn't see George come in. When George shot him with the needle gun he simply stopped in mid-sentence and sat there, dead. George stood near him and said, imitating the alien croak, "Wake up. Wake up. See us as we are and kill us!"

It was George's voice the city heard that morning, but it was the Fascinator's image, and the city did awake for the very first time and the war began.

George did not live to see the victory that finally came. He died of a heart attack at exactly eight o'clock.

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Introduction to L. E. Jones' THE EYES OF PHORKOS

Spoiled, no doubt, corrupted, perhaps, by the cornucopiae of material American publishers supply about their authors, we were a little bemused by a communication we received from Messrs. Rupert Hart-Davis, Ltd., Publishers, of 36 Soho Square, London W1, Cable Address Ruperto. *"Dear Sir, In reply to your letter of the 27th March, we have pleasure in giving below some biographical information on L. E. Jones [it read].* SIR LAWRENCE EVELYN JONES/*Born April, 1885/5th Baronet/Educated, Eton and Balliol/President, Oxford University Boat Club/Helbert Wagg & Co., Ltd. 1914-45/Has written the following books;/YOU AND THE PEACE/THE BISHOP AND THE COBBLER/JESUS: DISCOVERER AND GENIUS/BEYOND BELIEF/A VICTORIAN BOYHOOD/AN EDWARDIAN YOUTH/Lives in London/Member of Travellers and Beefsteak Clubs/Yours faithfully, Valerie King (Miss)." Not a word on Sir Lawrence's politics, hobbies, views on Literature or raising children, roses, or dogs. We need not, of course, have stopped at that. We have Sources, we have Resources. But we refrain from using them. If Sir Lawrence, and Messrs. Rupert Hart-Davis had intended for us to know more, they would have informed us. So be it. We are content. Urging a similar British restraint upon our readers, we advise them now to settle down in their chairs (with, perhaps, a glass of sherry and a biscuit), and read this story of the unfortunate Mr. James Carew, his invincible resentment, and the curious—indeed, we may say, singular—discovery which he made in the island of Phorkos, one of the smallest of the Cyclades, not sixty miles north of Crete.*

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THE EYES OF PHORKOS

by L. E. Jones

EVEN WHEN HE HAD MADE THE most astounding discovery in the whole history of archaelogy, Mr. James Carew's resentment was not appeased.

It had begun, this resentment of his, as far back as he could remember. It was aimed against God, his parents and the world in general. God for creating him with an enormous nose and nothing that could be called a chin to counter-balance it, no roof to his mouth, and a deep-red birthmark on the left side of his face. Against his parents for their part in that act of creation, and against his mother in particular for calling him, with Jim or Jimmy at her disposal, by the odious name of "Jimsy." And against people in general for the way they pretended not to notice his profile, that flaming birthmark, or his inability to pronounce the bulk of the consonants. For he knew, oh didn't he just know! what they were really thinking, the humbugs. Very well; let them wait. One day he would show them.

His parents had been merciful enough not to send Jimsy to school or college, but to educate him in all the stock subjects, except manliness and the art of give-and-take, through private tutors. There was also a patient Swiss who succeeded in making Jimsy's speech intelligible. His father was well-to-do, but insisted that Jimsy should have an occupation, if not a profession. Jimsy, anxious to cut loose from his home, was only too willing, but at every interview with a potential employer the man behind the big desk directed his eyes all round Jimsy but never at him, and Jimsy was not going to work for that sort. He knew them, the hypocrites. So when his father died suddenly in Jimsy's twenty-sixth year, leaving Jimsy a comfortable fortune, he was still at a loose end. And it was then that he met with Sir Mortimer Wheeler.

Sir Mortimer was gazing out from a television set, and he looked at Jimsy full in the face, and continued to do so without a hint of flinching. And, while calmly contemplating Jimsy's birth-stains, he talked to Jimsy about digging, about its excitement and rewards, in a way that took Jimsy clean out of himself. Here was a pursuit, it seemed, full of fascination; one that could be enjoyed in far-away,

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lonely places, and with a minimum of contact with evasive humbugs. Jimsy was thrilled. He listened to Sir Mortimer, on the screen or the air, at every opportunity. He bought his books, and then other books; he spent all his waking hours in the study of archaeology and excavation. He felt in his bones that digging was the thing for him.

After a year or more spent in persevering and intensive study of the subject, Jimsy felt that the time had come to dig. There was one obstacle in his way. To become an excavator, a beginner must attach himself, as a learner, to an experienced team under a Master; he must study the method, the know-how, in the field, Jimsy knew this perfectly well, but he could not bring himself to face the consequences: the eyes of his fellow-diggers, of the Master himself, searching the air all round his head, never directed at his own. Luckily Jimsy had money. Could he but find a suitable site for exploration, he was determined to equip his own expedition, hire the necessary labour, and teach himself the ropes by trial and error. But how to find that site?

And now Jimsy had a stroke of luck. While reading an archaeological journal his eyes fell upon a short paragraph from a correspondent in Athens mentioning that the little island of Phorkos, one of the smallest of the Cyclades, had again been violently shaken by an earthquake. The correspondent recalled that over twenty years ago Danish expedition had found some promising indications of a spade-worthy site on Phorkos, but that before sufficient progress had been made to confirm their hopes, an earthquake of unusual violence had destroyed their diggings, and indeed so contorted the whole area in which the fragments of prehistoric artifacts had been found that the Danes had abandoned the place as hopeless, and no survey had since been made.

Jimsy was not without imagination. "Why," he said to himself, "should not a second earthquake expose what a former earthquake overwhelmed?" He determined to have a look at Phorkos. About the island itself he could find out very little from the books. It was small and barren and lay on the southernmost fringe of the Cyclades, not sixty miles north of Crete. At its northern end, round the one small harbour, clustered Stheno, a little town of about fifteen hundred inhabitants, dominated by a Frankish castle of the thirteenth century, solid enough to have weathered a score of earthquakes. For there was this peculiarity about Phorkos, that it was more susceptible to earthquakes than its larger neighbours. When they had been shaken, Phorkos had on occasions been rent asunder, as could be seen in the disorderly confusion of faults and

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chasms at the southern end of the island where the Danes had found, and lost, the signs of a pre-Minoan civilisation.

Jimsy flew to Athens, engaged an interpreter, and after two changes of boat, sailed from Santorin in the small steamer which twice a week conveyed the mail, stores, and a few passengers to Stheno. He was agreeably surprised to find that neither his interpreter nor his fellow-passengers found any difficulty in looking him straight in the face. Either they must have seen worse in their time, or have felt that a rich Englishman could well afford such features. The discovery raised his spirits, but increased his resentment against the devastating tactfulness of the people at home.

From the sea, on this fine spring morning, Stheno was a pleasure to look at. Its shabby little houses, mostly of a dull grey, shone white against the deeper or lighter blues of hill and sea and sky. Through the clear Grecian air, the castle and its shadow stood boldly out, and the hill behind, which rose steeply from the harbour to about two thousand feet, and thence declined gently towards the south, had that natural grace of outline, of curve and fold and corrie, that distinguishes the greater mountains of Greece herself.

Jimsy was somewhat taken aback to find a crowd of about two-thirds of the population of Phorkos on the quay. He wondered how, and in what form, the news of his coming could have reached the island, but was assured by his interpreter that the bi-monthly mail-boat was always so received. The bulk of the people lived by fishing or supplying the wants of fishermen, and since much of the fishing was done by night, there was no difficulty in assembling a sixty-per-cent quorum to watch the mail-boat, or any other vessel for that matter, come along side.

But the Mayor of Stheno was above mingling with the crowd on such occasions. He had his dignity to maintain, and since a splendid view of the quay and harbour was to be had from the café-terrace on which he spent his working hours, he did not lose much by maintaining it. It was for the Mayor that Jimsy asked on landing, and to the café-terrace that he was conducted by a helpful group of about two hundred of the citizens.

The Mayor was a round little man in an alpaca jacket, with his hair *en brosse*. He shook hands warmly, offered Jimsy a glass of that colourless liquor distilled from plums which Jimsy, with his unroofed mouth, could never hope to name, and asked what he could do for the new arrival. The interview took time, not because the interpreter had any difficulty in translating Jimsy into Greek but because he felt that politeness demanded that he should convey the Mayor's

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answers in the nearest imitation that he could manage of Jimsy's own peculiar speech. Fortunately Jimsy was so delighted to find a fellow-creature who, instead of hypocritically pretending that Jimsy's articulation was normal, went out of his way to copy it, that he felt no impatience. The outcome of their prolonged and halting conversation was highly satisfactory. It appeared that the shaken area in the south of the island which Jimsy wished to survey was the property of the one big landowner in the island, the possessor of three-quarters of its total area and of the Frankish castle. He was a man of ancient lineage and immense pride, but, since the island was barren and the castle, except for two rooms at the base of the keep, a complete ruin, without visible means of subsistence. As a pauper, he was kept alive by the community who, in deference to his pride, had lodged him, with a minimum of furniture, in those two rooms. But all lifted their hats to him, and a few of the richer citizens, of whom the Mayor was one, had in their charity combined to give him, from time to time, the one pleasure left to him: to get drunk and forget the humiliation of his venerable line. At the moment, the Mayor explained, the nobleman was enjoying, in solitude, one of his spells of blessed oblivion, and could not be consulted. But no matter, the Mayor could speak for him, and give Jimsy the permission he asked for. For the Mayor could remember the days of the Danes, and of the employment they gave, of their spending money in the town itself, and of the hope they had held out of making the name of Phorkos famous, and a centre of interest to tourists.

There was no road, only a footpath, to the site of the former diggings, but the Danes had, said the Mayor, built a small stone quay on a rocky inlet for landing stores, and there was more than one fishing-boat in the harbour equipped with an auxiliary engine. The Mayor himself conducted Jimsy and the interpreter to the main tavern in the little square, where clean bedrooms were to be had for a price instantaneously adjusted, through the landlord's presence of mind, to the pocket of a rich Englishman. Jimsy was then ceremoniously shown into the kitchen and invited to point out which of several large fish stewing in a giant pan he would prefer for his supper. Finally the Mayor promised to arrange for a boat to be ready on the morrow, and Jimsy, although fatigued by the effort of making sense of the interpreter's imitation of himself, felt that he had had a good day.

Next morning, seen off by a crowd of about five hundred souls, Jimsy embarked for the southern end of the island. The sea was calm and the water inshore translucent;

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the boat chugged away, doing about five knots, and in something over a couple of hours they landed at the small stone quay. Two fishermen guided him and the interpreter up the gentle slopes to a spot whereabouts, the fishermen assured him, the Danes had dug. Jimsy heard them exclaiming in tones of surprise; they jabbered away, with much waving of hands, to the interpreter who, forgetting his manners, fortunately reported their talk in his customary and fully consonanted speech to Jimsy. It appeared that this was their first visit to the place since the recent earthquake, and that a deep chasm, twenty feet wide at the top and about thirty feet deep, now yawned, a hundred yards long, where no chasm had been before.

"They say, it have come back, the old valley where the yellow gentlemens digged," said the interpreter.

Jimsy's heart leaped within him. So he had been right. What one earthquake did, another had undone. In no time he had slid down the raw sides of the new-born ravine, and began to stumble, his eyes darting from side to side, along its rubbly bottom. His luck held. He had not gone forty yards when he perceived, with the feelings of stout Cortez, in a slightly overhung recess from which a tumbled mass of stone and earth had fallen, the exposed surface of Cyclopean masonry. It was indubitable. Only three gigantic blocks, the shape of French lump-sugar, were visible, but it was enough. He had found his site.

In his excitement, Jimsy's first instinct was to shout and beckon to the three men left on the edge of the gulf. But he recollected himself in time. No suspicion of his find must be allowed to leak out. He moved on at once, scrambling and stumbling to the very end of the narrowing crack, carefully scanning the sides, stooping now and then to pick up and examine fragments of the rubble, and returning slowly, with care not to give a second glance to his precious discovery. If only he could have found means to cover up those telltale blocks! But he could not. He must rely upon his powers of dissimulation. Jimsy scrambled up again at the spot where he had descended, where the three men still stood. He tried to express in his normally unhappy and hang-dog features still greater discontent. He shook his head gloomily. "Nothing," he said to the interpreter. "Whatever those Danes found, the earthquakes must have buried. We have been on a wild-goose chase." His last phrase was unfortunate. The interpreter in endeavouring to pass it on to the fishermen, got himself involved in a long and barren discussion. If it was geese the gentleman was looking for, he should never have come to Phorkos. There were none. Or did he

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mean gulls? Then it was to the northern end of the island he must go. But at any rate they understood that his quest had been a failure, that they must return defeated to Stheno, that their Mayor's dreams of a future tourist traffic, which had quickly spread through the town overnight, were not to be fulfilled. Three disappointed and one rejoicing man chugged sadly and with elation back to Stheno.

Jimsy had three days to wait before the mail-boat would again be leaving for Santorin. He would have desperately liked to make a second, secret visit to the ravine, with the tools necessary for covering up the exposed masonry. But with the eyes of the whole town upon him, it was not to be thought of. The one thing still open to him to do, was to confirm his legal priority over any other archaeologist to whom his own reasoning about the recent earthquake might also have occurred. Again fortune favoured him. On the second day of his enforced sojurn the Mayor sent a message asking Jimsy to do him the honour of a visit. He went with the interpreter to the Mayor's café-terrace. The Mayor informed him that the noble pauper in the castle had now recovered from his drinking-bout, and was anxious to receive the island's distinguished visitor. If agreeable to Jimsy, the Mayor would himself escort him to an audience. Jimsy wanted nothing better.

At three o'clock that afternoon, the hour at which the universal siesta ended, Jimsy, the Mayor and the interpreter panted up the stony path, little more than a goat-track, to the castle. The main gateway in the outer walls had long ago been filled with rough masonry, in the interests of defence, and only a narrow postern on the landward side provided an entry. They crossed the dusty stone-strewn enceinte, in which was a well-head with bucket and chain, to the cavernous open door of the keep. In the doorway stood the master of all, or nearly all, he surveyed.

In spite of indigence, in spite of drink, the old chieftain was good to look at. He had a great head and a commanding nose; his eyes, though blood-shot, had authority in them; and the hand he held out in greeting, with long bony fingers, would have pleased Van Dyck. There was condescension, but also courtesy, in his handshake, and he invited his visitors to enter his bare room, in which stood little beyond a deal table and two straw-bottomed chairs, without a shadow of misgiving that the earthen floor, the cobwebbed ceiling, might call for apology or explanation. He waved Jimsy into one of the chairs, seated himself on the other, and left the Mayor and the interpreter, as befitted their stations in life, to stand. Although he had nothing to offer in the way of food and drink, this seemed to cause him no embar-

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rassment, for he had something better: the story of his own descent. On this he immediately embarked, and since it went back, in the direct line, to Perseus, Jimsy was able, after a pause for a much-abridged translation by the interpreter, to offer his unfeigned felicitations. Had Jimsy remembered, which he did not, that Perseus was a son of Zeus himself, he would have been able to add a compliment or two on the chieftain's modesty in not mentioning it. (He could not know that it was not modesty, but a native shrewdness as to how much the Englishman was likely to swallow, that had prompted his host to leave Zeus out of it.)

The story over at long last, Jimsy rose as if to take his leave, then, turning to the interpreter, said: "By the way, please ask his lordship if he is willing to confirm his permission, given through Mr. Mayor here, for me to dig for antiquities on his property? For although the earthquake has destroyed the diggings of the Danes, it may be that a proper survey would reveal other sites. That I shall return is certain, if only to renew my acquaintance with so distinguished a nobleman, not to speak of Mr. Mayor himself. But if tourists were to be attracted . . ."

At the word "tourists" the nobleman sat up. It was one of the few English words known to him. Jimsy saw his interest and pressed his advantage.

"If tourists are to be attracted," continued Jimsy, "I must discover antiques. For that I must employ much labour and purchase great quantities of food and stores. Such expense could only be justified if I were granted a sole and exclusive licence to search and dig."

The old man looked at the Mayor, who addressed him in rapid and lively tones. The old man nodded. "Tell the gentleman," he said to the interpreter, "that I will grant him what he asks, on one condition. That I, the owner of these buried treasures, and not he, the excavator, shall present them to the Museum at Athens."

Since all discovered objects of the sort had, by law, to be given to the museums, this condition cost Jimsy nothing, but he now made a serious blunder.

"Ask him," he said to the interpreter, "if, for good order's sake, I may have this licence in writing."

The interpreter passed this on. The question all but wrecked Jimsy's hopes. For the old chieftain leapt from his chair: his face turned purple with rage; he shouted:

"Never has a Perseid been asked for his given word to be put into writing!"

Jimsy surrendered on the spot.

"Tell his lordship that I apologise. I ask for nothing but the word he has given. Ask him to excuse me, since in my country it was a King himself who signed Magna Carta."

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The old man sat down again. He mumbled and grumbled, asked what King of England was descended from a contemporary of Perseus, but was finally appeased by the Mayor. The interview concluded with compliments on all sides.

"All the same, you must keep the old gentleman alive," Jimsy said to the Mayor as they descended the goat-track.

"We will double his rations," said the Mayor.

Jimsy returned to England and, with the help of a few humbugs who nevertheless understood archaeological exploration, bought the necessary stores and equipment and shipped them off to Phorkos, in the name of the Mayor. Jimsy vaguely talked of the "Near-East" to his few advisers and let it be understood by them that he had no definite site in view, and quietly took a plane for Athens.

When the stores arrived at Phorkos Jimsy was already in his old lodging and had made every arrangement for their reception. Most of them went into a warehouse on the quay at Stheno, but the tents and tools and a fortnight's supply of food was landed at the southern site. All the food and wine had been purchased locally in Stheno, and the labour for digging hired there. Jimsy had also chartered a motor-driven fishing-boat for the exclusive use of the camp; had ordered the construction on the site of wooden huts for himself and his labourers; and had arranged in Athens that a young and keen archaeologist, with more knowledge than cash, should, for a generous retainer, hold himself ready to join Jimsy on the shortest notice. For things might turn up beyond Jimsy's competence to evaluate. And then Jimsy began to dig.

That he would find something of interest, the three giant blocks of exposed masonry made certain. But that he would find what he did find, was beyond the imagination of any archaeologist, past or present, let alone the ignorant Jimsy.

Jimsy, for all his inexperience, had the gift of patience, and his overpaid workmen were astonished at his continuous exhortations to them to "go slow." Jimsy's constant fear was that a pick or spade should come in contact with anything solid other than earth or rock or debris, and it was a delightful surprise to his men to discover that the less they exerted their muscles, the more they used their fingers rather than their tools, the better pleased was their employer. All the spoil was carried carefully away and screened, but as the expanse of Cyclopean masonry grew higher and wider and deeper and ever more tantalising, nothing whatever was found in its vicinity in the ravine itself.

The sun blazed, the weeks went by. Jimsy and his men looked like blacks; the motor-boat brought

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food and wine and fresh water every other day; and Jimsy's excitement grew and grew. When a second great wall of masonry began to appear, running parallel to the first and about nine feet from it, Jimsy sent his interpreter to Santorin, whence he could telegraph "Come" to Dr. Makkas in Athens.

Dr. Makkas came. By the time he arrived Jimsy's men had already exposed a pavement at the foot of the monster parallel walls and, more exciting still, one or two shafts, sunk from the top of the bank, had "struck oil" in the form of smaller, shaped stones set in concentric and overlapping rows.

"This," said Dr. Makkas, "can only be the roof of a bee-hive tomb. You will find—I haven't a doubt—that the passage between the great walls will be found to lead up to its entrance."

"Another Mycenae?" Jimsy's birthmark shone like a red lantern.

"Mycenae was the capital of a kingdom on the mainland," said the Greek. "This is a remote and barren island. Do not expect too much. But let us see."

After six more months of slow, patient, amateurish digging, they did see. There was a day when it became apparent that the entrance from the passage between the great walls to the circular structure with a beehive roof which now stood half-exposed, had been blocked with masonry, and with masonry that, for all its inferiority to the lordly stones that flanked and crowned that imposing and disproportionate doorway, had been good enough for its purpose. And indeed better, since, intended as a defense against marauders, it had held its own against earthquakes. Jimsy now knew that with the roof and doorway intact, it was more than likely that whatever the tomb had contained would be found, not buried in rubble, but exposed to view. While a practicable hole was, with infinite precautions, being opened in the wall by his professional masons, Jimsy and Dr. Makkas all but held hands. At length the moment came. The workmen had contrived, and shored with timber, a hole large enough for a man to crawl through. For the last half-hour of their task Jimsy had been at their shoulders, attempting, between their necks, beneath their arms, above their heads, or under their sterns, to direct a ray from his torch into the venerable darkness, far older than that which was over Egypt, visible in the growing aperture. Then the two masons, who like all meridionals had a sense of drama, rose together, bowed to Jimsy and pointed to the opening. Torch in hand, Jimsy crawled in, followed, nose to stern, by Dr. Makkas.

At the first few passes of his torch across the level floor of the great rotunda, inches deep in fine dust, he was disappointed. In a semi-circle of twenty feet in di-

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ameter round the spot where the two men stood upright, there was nothing to be seen but this thick, soft carpet of fine debris. But when he had advanced a few yards into the cavernous place, and, turning his torch back to the right of the entrance, began to follow the curve of the wall, he came upon a sight that took his breath away. Piled up, pell-mell, against the wall, in a confused heap several yards wide and three to four feet in height where it abutted on the wall itself, was a mass of broken stone figures. Heads, torsos, arms, legs, hand and feet lay piled in confusion. They were human figures, and the staggering, the inexplicable thing about them was that, so far from being primitive or archaic in form, as befitted the indubitable age of their surroundings, they had all been sculptured with the realistic skill of a Phidias, or rather of a Michael Angelo. Jimsy picked up a hand, Dr Makkas a foot, that lay on the edge of the heap, and carried them to the opening and out into the sunlight. Never had either of them seen, fashioned in stone, so close, so delicate, so precise an imitation of nature. The most exiguous fold or wrinkle of the skin of the hand, the tiny corrugations on the surface of a finger-nail, the lines of the palm so dear to soothsayers, all were reproduced by the artist with unfailing verisimilitude. Here was the supreme, the consummate *trompe-l'oeil*. It just did not make sense.

Jimsy and the expert were too much flabbergasted to do any thinking. They spent the rest of the day bringing out as many as they could of their fantastic finds. The two masons spent the night in enlarging the entrance to the tomb, while Jimsy, tossing in his bunk, felt anything but triumphant; rather he felt more resentful than ever. He had hoped, when he first spied those Cyclopean blocks in the ravine, to make discoveries which he might be able, with the help of an expert, to "place," historically, or rather prehistorically, speaking. He had visions of a new display, perhaps a new room, in the Museum at Athens. Instead, he found himself the discoverer of a "phoney" cache, in a tomb that might well be three thousand years old or more, of artifacts that, whatever their intrinsic merit, could not possibly have been created within a couple of millennia from the date of their hiding place.

The next two or three days were spent in laying out the broken pieces of the stone figures on the floor of the tomb, now reasonably lighted from a greatly enlarged entrance. All the breakages had been clean ones; the stone itself was white and hard as marble, which it might well have been; and Jimsy and Dr. Makkas had no difficulty in assembling the heads, torsos, and limbs into their proper positions. And now further puzzles became

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apparent. The sculptor, whoever he was, had paid no regard to any conventional artistic canons. Hardly one of the statues, when put together, had any claims to beauty or even dignity. The torsos were for the most part slightly misshapen or under-nourished; the faces were often mean, sometimes repellent; and the arms and legs, when reattached to the torsos, were as often as not in the most ungainly positions. Elbows and knees were bent, one foot of the same figure flat, the other in a tip-toe position; scarcely a statue among them, if restored, could have stood upright upon its feet. Although varying in height, none exceeded five foot ten inches, or fell below five feet four. But the most astonishing thing about them was not discovered until the third day of examination. By this time a number of the assembled figures had been carried to one of the wooden huts and laid out on a table, in full sunlight, for more intense study. In the dimmer light of the tomb, a characteristic of all the images seemed to be their total baldness; no attempt had been made by the sculptor to imitate, in stone, human hair. But, sitting at the table in the hut, Jimsy, picking up a head, noticed that, upon one eyelid, there were half a dozen stone eyelashes, faintly curving, slender and fine. Taking up his magnifying glass, he examined the eyelids on other heads. The minute stumps of broken eyelashes could be both seen and felt. But if eyelashes, thought Jimsy, why not hair? He passed his fingers lightly over the rounded skull. The surface was rough, not smooth to his touch. With the magnifying glass he could detect, here also, the broken roots of innumerable, but separated, hairs. What hand, what tools, could conceivably have worked with a touch so delicate? What known marble would stand up to such minute division of its substance?

Jimsy now recognised that the uniqueness of his discovery was not so much in the contrast between the statues and their hiding-place, as in the figures themselves. Accounting for their presence in this archaic tomb was a minor problem compared with accounting for their existence at all. It was a question not of when, but of how, they were created. To what class of experts should they be submitted? To archaeologists, or to a Chinese carver of those fantastic ivory spheres, rolling freely within one another? He felt helpless and baffled, and at a loss as to whom he should turn for advice.

His perplexity was not to be prolonged.

Michali Papastavros, the more intelligent of the two masons, had, during those months of digging, become fired with ambition. Catching excitement from Jimsy, he began to dream of some remarkable "find" to be discovered, not in his

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capacity as a mere workman obeying orders, but by himself on his own initiative. He wanted personal glory; he wanted his name in the newspapers.

During the same afternoon when Jimsy and Dr. Makkas had been studying the figures on the table in the hutment, Michali, who was careful and trustworthy, had been carrying on, inside the tomb, the long slow task of removing pieces from the huddle against the wall and laying them out on the floor near the entrance. While so employed, he did make a discovery. While carefully extracting a limb from the debris, at a point close against the wall and exactly opposite the middle of the doorway, he uncovered, in brushing away dust with his hand, a small segment of a circular crack in the floor. Realising at once that there was something new, he went on brushuntil he had cleared the surface of a circular stone, about one foot in diameter, let into and level with the floor itself. A glance was enough; he immediately covered it up again. He, Michali Papastavros, and he alone, was going to prise up that stone and be the discoverer of what lay beneath. That something did lie beneath it he felt assured. Its exact alignment with the centre of the doorway was not likely to be a mere accident. More probably, it concealed the *clou* of the whole massive structure.

With the tools at his disposal, Michali felt that it would not be a lengthy job to lift that stone. The important thing was to make sure that he would be alone and undisturbed when doing it. The best time would be sunrise. It was now near midsummer, and the sun rose a couple of hours before the camp bestirred itself. Moreover, since the doorway faced due east, there would be enough light in the tomb to work by. The flash of a torch, even at that early hour, might catch the eyes of some restless wanderer.

After laying out his tools in the tomb itself, Michali went early to his bunk, but not to sleep. He was far too much excited. He did not know that in his employer's hut across the ravine, Jimsy, too, could not sleep. Had he known it, he would have postponed his operation.

At first daylight, Michali crept out of the hut and made his way, with many a look around, to the tomb. At sunrise he began to work. After three centuries or so, a stopper of any kind is apt to stick. This one was no exception. But the floor into which it was sunk was not made of solid rock, but of pebbly conglomerate, the joint work of time and of the builders of the tomb. It could be drilled even with a hand-drill. For fear of making betraying sounds, Michali did not intend to use a pick-axe. But at almost the last moment, when another five minutes would have brought him to the great moment

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of inserting the crow-bar, his impatience got the better of him. He struck a few ringing blows with his pick-axe. "Let them hear," he thought. "By the time somebody arrives I shall have exposed the treasure." He laid down the pick-axe, inserted the crow-bar, lifted the stone, and looked into the cavity.

Jimsy was also early astir. Unable to sleep, he left his bunk about an hour after sunrise. Jimsy had little eye for natural beauty, but even he was aware of the transparency of the air, the delicate outlines of the gentle peak behind which lay Stheno, the lapis-lazuli of the sea at his feet when he turned his back to the sun. He stood for a few moments in the early silence, debating whether to go for a swim, when he heard, clear and distinct, the sound of a pick-axe. Somebody was at work, and at work inside the tomb. It was against all rules.

Furious, Jimsy stumbled and strode towards the doorway which now, entirely free from the obstructing wall, gave at this hour to the interior a practicable twilight. He went straight in. What he saw was a figure standing motionless against the opposite wall, a crow-bar in its right hand, gazing down at its feet.

"Wha'e buyee he?" shouted Jimsy, angrier still when he recognised the familiar figure of his most trusted workman in the old brown sleeveless jersey and the short blue denim trousers. But the figure never stirred.

Jimsy flashed the torch which he always carried full upon the blasted fellow, standing there like a bloody statue and taking no more notice than . . . His thoughts came to a full stop. If anybody's hair did ever really stand on end it must have been Jimsy's at that moment. For, in the full torchlight, Michali's black thatch, his swarthy face, his raven's wing of a moustache, his sun-browned arms, were all white marble. And still, with the stillness of a stone.

"Oh my God!" thought Jimsy. "He *is* a bloody statue!" And he was.

Jimsy often thought afterwards, with a shudder, of how near he had been to going up to Michali and touching him, in which case it was a hundred to one that he would have glanced down to see what it was that this petrified workman was gazing at. Fortunately a kind of panic gripped him, a horror of the uncanny, of the incredible, and his legs could no longer obey his instinct. And as he stood dumbfounded, there flashed into his brain a memory from his schoolroom days. "Turned to stone—men turned to stone—why of course—the Gorgon's head! These unaccountable figures, broken and heaped together by the rocking, no doubt, of an earthquake—Medusas victims, men who had, poor devils,

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looked into the face beneath the snaky locks! It all hung together. And that figure over there, appallingly still, preternaturally blanched, his trusty Michali; what else could he be gazing at, but the head, the very Gorgon's head? That lethal head was there, at this very moment, within a few yards of himself." Jimsy turned and stumbled out of the tomb, collapsed upon a heap of rubble and was violently sick. When he had pulled himself together, his first thought was for flight; to make some monstrously implausible excuse for reembarking the whole outfit, and turning his back for ever upon the accursed place. But he saw at once that such cowardice was out of the question. The tomb could not possibly be left open, to trap who knows how many victims, and unless he blocked it with his own hands, no workmen rebuilding the wall could be prevented from seeing that motionless white figure against the opposite wall. And even supposing that he himself had been capable, which he was not, of reerecting the wall, that it would be pulled down again was certain. There were the Cyclopean walls, the beehive roof—all must be buried again without trace. And what was the use of burying a site that had been worked upon by a dozen men, most of whom had handled the broken figures for days on end. No, abandonment was not to be thought of.

Then Jimsy's thoughts took a very different turn. He, James Carew, had made the most astounding archaeological discovery ever known, one that could truly be called "inconceivable." And he could prove it; it would be undeniable; let them all come and see for themselves. If they thought they could account for the figures, how would they account for the petrification of Michali? He would even be able to show them—well no, not to "show" them—that monstrous Thing in there must never be "seen" again—but wait a minute, couldn't it be? Didn't Perseus see it, reflected in his shield? (Perseus!—odd that the old chap in the castle at Stheno—Stheno? had he heard that name somewhere before?—should claim descent from Perseus, the slayer of the Gorgon.) Jimsy had no polished shield, but he had better, he had looking-glasses. A little arrangement of mirrors—by Jove he'd have to be careful! —And the Thing *could* be shown.

Jimsy became more and more elated, shamefully forgetting the tragedy of poor Michali, who would be "Exhibit A" to the assembled, the wondering, the applauding archaeologists from all the world over.

Jimsy's new reverie of towering fame was interrupted by sounds from the camp. It was beginning to bestir itself for the day's work. He must take Makkas into his confidence; but first, without a mo-

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ment's delay, he must see that the aproach to the tomb was effectively barred. Fortunately the only possible way to the entrance was through the passage between the Cyclopean walls. Jimsy woke the interpreter, got from him the Greek for "Keep out on pain of instant dismissal," painted this notice on a board, and hung it on a length of barbed wire across the narrow entrance to the passage. From that spot the doorway of the cave, even in sunlight, even in the early morning, was nothing but a black hole. He went back to the hut that he shared with Dr. Makkas.

A man who has worked for many months in the open air beneath an Aegean sun cannot exactly turn pale, but Dr. Makkas's complexion, while he listened to Jimsy's story, did take on a lighter hue. He had a quick mind, that took in the whole chain of consequences of this, to him, ghastly discovery more speedily than had Jimsy's. While Jimsy was briefly dismissing the question of attempting to cover things up. Dr. Makkas nodded; when he turned to his dreams for the future, Dr. Makkas shook his head. But when Jimsy concluded with an invitation to Makkas to come with him at once to the tomb, with a couple of shaving-mirrors, in order to inspect the Thing, Dr. Makkas almost yelled at him. "Never, never, never!" he shouted.

Damn the fellow, thought Jimsy; he's afraid.

"There's no risk if we're careful," he told him.

But Dr. Makkas was not afraid for his life. Trembling, and in his broken inadequate English, he explained to Jimsy that he had a wife and child; that he was at the beginning of a hopeful career, but that if he, an already highly qualified archaeologist, was to bear witness to facts which, however true, would and could never be believed, his career would be at an end. So far from going to see for himself, he was going to leave at once for Stheno, and he begged Jimsy, in the name of humanity, to give him a letter dated the day before, granting him leave of absence or, if Jimsy preferred it, sacking him. He would return his retainer and his salary; he would praise Jimsy as a great excavator, but go he must. It was in vain that Jimsy pointed out that the petrification of Michali was a fact so solid that no sceptic could possibly get over it; that the broken figures were ample corroboration. Makkas replied that Michali Papastavros could never be made a public, or even a private, exhibit; that any disposition of that petrified mason other than by immediately coffining him and burying him in the cemetery at Stheno as the victim of an accident, would cost Jimsy his life, whether by pistol, knife, or dagger.

Jimsy had not thought of that. It was certainly a problem. Meanwhile he realised that he must

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write off Makkas and go on alone. If Makkas was fool enough to refuse his share in Jimsy's coming glory, that was his own funeral. With a contemptuous shrug he wrote the ante-dated letter of leave, paid Makkas the small arrears of his salary, and let him go. What excuse Makkas would make to the workers for his sudden departure, was not Jimsy's affair. When, half an hour later, he saw Makkas descending the track to the quay, with two boatmen carrying his bags, he felt a pang of loneliness. To be the only man in the world who had discovered the truth of a fabulous myth was exhilarating; but to carry the sole responsibility of disposing of the marble statue of the late Michali Papastavros, now standing in an open tomb within two hundred yards of his unsuspecting fellows, was anything but enjoyable. However, at the moment the question of Michali simulacrum must wait; the urgent busines was to deal with the Thing that had petrified him.

Fortunately Jimsy had with him, in his hut, two looking-glasses, one about six inches by five framed in wood, the other a circular shaving-glass on a stem of aluminium, fashioned to stand by itself, but with a hook for hanging, and turning freely on a flexible joint. Remembering the impunity with which Perseus had regarded the face of Medusa when reflected in his shield, Jimsy was confident that, with the aid of these mirrors, he would be able to examine, without risk, whatever it was that had retained the Gorgon's foul power of petrifaction. Taking some light deal boxes for supporting the mirrors, he made his way back to the tomb.

That he approached the marmoreal, brown-jersied figure circumspectly, goes without saying. For the first time he now perceived the round hole, with the stone stopper beside it, at the feet of the staute. Creeping forward at full length, like a deerstalker, he sounded the depth of the cavity with the handle of Michali's pick-axe, which lay at hand. It was not more than nine inches in depth. It was a matter of care, rather than of difficulty, to arrange his looking-glasses, with the help of the wooden boxes, on opposite sides of the opening, at such an angle that the reflection of any object on the floor of the circular cavity would be thrown by the shaving-glass, which had its back to Jimsy, into the face of the opposite mirror, into which Jimsy could gaze from his prone position. That done, he had only to bind his torch to the handle of the pick-axe, push it over the centre of the hole, and see, in the opposite mirror, whatever there was to be seen. It turned out to be little enough, as far as substance went. There was a good deal of greyish dust and, lying in the centre, like

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eggs in a nest, two small round metallic objects. They glinted faintly in the torch-light.

Medusa's eyes, thought Jimsy, with a measure of disappointment, tinged with relief that three millennia had proved too much for the snaky locks. The next problem was how to remove them. Jimsy felt pretty certain that, since most of Perseus must have been exposed to the Gorgon's gaze, there was no danger so long as he avoided looking at the lethal little objects. But Perseus lived a long time ago, and a myth might not be foolproof. On the other hand, if no part of him was ever to be exposed to those marble-like eyes, there was nothing to be done but push the stone stopper into place and leave them where they were. Jimsy would not for a moment consider such poltroonery.

Having assured himself that the blank stony eyes of Michali's statue were gazing directly at the bottom of the hole, he decided to risk the tip of one little finger. A stone tip to one finger would not be a disaster; indeed it would be a most striking piece of evidence for his discovery. He pushed the little finger of his left hand over the near rim of the cavity. Nothing happened. So Jimsy shut his eyes tight, wriggled forward, plunged his right hand boldly into the hole, gathered the pair of tiny globes, and transferred them to his right trouser pocket.

He stood upright again feeling like a god. In his trouser pocket he had the means of petrifying, at a pinch, all comers. Not that the idea that he might ever do so for a moment crossed his mind.

Jimsy returned to his hut, found an old, battered but still stout tobacco-pouch of soft leather with a flap that fastened with a press-button, closed his eyes, and transferred the "eyes" from his hip-pocket to the pouch. This he replaced in a hip-pocket which could be buttoned up.

He then sat down to consider the problem of Michali. That Michali had put on weight was undeniable, and Jimsy was far from muscular. A fleeting idea of somehow dragging the statue down to the sea, casting him in and leaving his jersey and denims at a spot where the workers sometimes swam, was dismissed in an instant. He could never do it single-handed; besides, the sea that lapped that rocky coast was entirely translucent when calm. Sooner or later Michali would be seen, in his whiteness, through the clear sea-water. Then again, while Dr. Makkas's talk of a coffin and a burial at Stheno had been absurd, he had been perfectly right in saying that the loss of one of his workmen must be accounted for, and that island opinion would be outraged at any attempt to use the poor chap as an exhibit. Unless—and Jimsy suddenly saw

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how simple the solution was. The whole camp must be taken into his confidence, he told the whole story in detail, and be shown Michali where he stood. Nobody had been to blame except possibly Michali himself. A suggestion that the statue, which had a certain air of nobility, resting on a crow-bar and gazing down at its feet, might eventually be set up at Michali's own memorial in the cemetery, might even be welcome to his friends and family. After all, thought Jimsy, straightforwardness is always best. The men had not yet scattered to their tasks. Jimsy sent the interpreter to gather them together. They sat in a circle in front of Jimsy's hut and, sentence by sentence, the interpreter unfolded to them the implausible story.

"We will now," said Jimsy, "pay our last respects to our comrade," and he led a silent, awestruck procession to the doorway of the tomb. Here there was some natural hesitation, but Jimsy assured them that there was no danger. The lethal Things were safe in his own keeping. He led them in, and they stood in a statuesque half-circle, as silent, as immobile, as the figure at which they gazed.

Later on, Jimsy was reassured by finding, on enquiry, that Michali had been an orphan, was unmarried, and that his sole relative in Stheno was a great-uncle so crippled with arthritis as to be only a thought more mobile than his late nephew. He was still more comforted by the strange discovery that these unsophisticated islanders could take a miracle in their stride. They were concerned about fetching an Orthodox priest, cypress branches, candles, and a long white nightgown in which to clothe their petrified companion, but they said nothing about moving him from the tomb. There was a great deal of heads being put together, conversations in hushed voices; and when the foreman came to ask Jimsy's leave for the use of the motor-boat, on its return, in order to fetch the priest and the bare funeral necessities, he earnestly begged that Michali might be left where he was until the priest should arrive. Jimsy, for all his impatience to tell the world, was shrewd enough to see that the co-operation of these simple souls might be vital to his plans; and since no steamer would be leaving Stheno for another four days, he decided not, as he had first intended, to go in the boat with the men, but to make it a point with them that he, the leader, would remain in camp to protect the tomb from any profane intrusion.

His patience was well rewarded. During the twenty-four hours while the funeral committee was away, and no work was done, the men left in the camp had nothing to do but to discuss the matter between themselves. Jimsy saw to it

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that the interpreter should "listen in," all tact and sympathy, to their discussions. His report to Jimsy was highly satisfactory. It was, it seemed, generally agreed that a miracle could only come from God; that although this particular miracle had struck a man dead, it had also transformed him into a thing of pre-eminant beauty and dignity; that the actual instruments of this ennobling change must be the relics of a Saint; and that the proper course now would be to consecrate the tomb as a Christian shrine, put a canopy over Michali, enclose the relics in a casket, and, by encouraging a constant flow of devout, and not necessarily impecunious, pilgrims, return thanks to Heaven for the honour done to the island of Phorkos. The interpreter had even heard a whisper of "tourists."

All this suited Jimsy's book down to the ground. For since the defection of Dr. Makkas, to have been compelled by public opinion to coffin and bury Michali would have been fatal to him. The broken figures might be inexplicable, but nobody, short of seeing Michali *in situ*, would believe in the Gorgon's eyes. It now looked as if public opinion was going to be Jimsy's strongest ally.

Thirty-six hours later the deputation arrived from Stheno, its numbers much increased, and filling several boats. There was not only a priest but the Mayor; not only the Mayor, but, on a stretcher, the arthritic uncle. Even before the arrival of the boats a trickle of sightseers had reached the camp, thirsty and much fatigued, by the landward track, but Jimsy had so successfully discouraged the first batch by hints of danger, and by flat refusals to supply either food or drink, that a grapevine message, running back towards the town, had put an end to the nuisance.

The priest, as much a peasant as the workmen, had no difficulty in accepting the miracle; and, after Michali had been suitably dressed in a temporary nightgown, performed the due rites in a tomb brightly illuminated with candles, before a makeshift altar. Jimsy observed with inward satisfaction the growing confusion in the minds of the kneeling congregation; one or two of them genuflected towards Michali before leaving the tomb. As regards the future, the priest had no suggestions to make. That, he said, lay in the hands of his superiors, to whom he would make a full report. He did, however, enquire whether Jimsy would care to entrust what he called "the relics" to himself. He promised to house them in a worthy manner, pending the decision of the ecclesiastical authorities. The Mayor, who was present at this parley, winked at Jimsy when the word "relics" was used. For unlike the priest, he was moderately well educated, and

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the idea of a shrine to St. Medusa tickled him greatly. But he said nothing. For he was shrewd enough to see at once that if the story Jimsy had confided to him was right, and Michali had in fact been petrified by the Gorgon's eyes, the truth was too staggering to be believed. But a miracle—well, look at Lourdes! The Mayor's thoughts ran forward to fantastic and delicious lengths.

Jimsy was able to put off the priest by explaining that the "relics"—he did not confess to having them in his hip-pocket, snug in a battered tobacco-pouch—were not Jimsy's to dispose of. They belonged, for the time being, to the landowner in his castle. There was, moreover, a law relating to achaic discoveries. The priest might be sure that they would be reverently taken care of.

Satisfied that, for the time being, his cherished "Exhibit" was safe and in no danger from the islanders, Jimsy decided to return to Stheno with the priest and the Mayor. He had no difficulty in persuading the Mayor not only to sign a collection of warning-off notices, stuck round the perimeter of the camp, but to confer upon the now idle workmen, to whom Jimsy had dealt out arm-bands, semi-official status as guardians of the site. Nobody was to be allowed access to the tomb without a written permit from the Mayor or Mr. Carew.

While the boat was chugging back to the northern end of the island, Jimsy noticed that the priest, in the bows, was talking most earnestly, and with a look of perplexity, to the interpreter. At length the interpreter came, stepping over thwarts, to the stern where Jimsy sat with the Mayor. The priest, he told Jimsy, had cold feet. He felt he had been carried away by the novelty and excitement of this strange miracle; but what would be said to him by his superiors for having read the burial service over an unburied lump of stone? In retrospect it seemed not merely irregular but outrageous. And a miracle that killed an innocent man? Could it really be of God? Might not, instead, some power of evil, some pagan-devilry, have been at work.

Fortunately for Jimsy, the scripture lessons of his early youth had not been wasted. He had an excellent memory, and being himself, as we have seen, quick to suspect and to resent a slight, he had been greatly struck as a boy, by Jehovah's treatment of Uzzah. Uzzah had been not merely innocent, but had tried to be helpful: an ox had pecked, the Ark of the Covenant had begun to slip and Uzzah had put a hand on it to steady it. For that he was struck dead on the spot, not because he was guilty, but because the Ark was holy. Jimsy told the tale to the interpreter.

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"Go," he said, "and remind the priest of this story of Uzzah, and ask him whether Michali may not have been petrified not for any fault, but because he was interfering, although unknowingly, with the holy relics buried in the tomb?"

The interpreter scrambled back into the bows. He could not, as ordered, remind the priest of Uzzah, because the priest had never heard of Uzzah, having only the scrappiest acquaintance with the scriptures; but he did relate the story to the priest, with considerable animation and suitable gestures; and the priest was perfectly willing to take the word of a rich Englishman, even if a heretic, that it occurred in Holy Writ. The holiness of holy things, especially of relics, was a familiar idea to him. He nodded, and the perplexity left his countenance.

"That was a fine stroke of business," the Mayor whispered to Jimsy. "I don't suppose the high-up ecclesiastics will be taken in, but they move like tortoises, and meanwhile St. Medusa will, I hope, be standing on her own legs."

"I only need a week or so," said Jimsy.

"I need years and years," said the Mayor.

The crowd that met them on the quay at Stheno was enormous, for a rumour had gone the rounds that the effigy of Michali Papastavros might be with the party. While the priest and the Mayor went among the crowd, explaining that, although an undoubted miracle had occurred, no decision about Papastavros could be taken until the Bishop's pleasure was known, Jimsy himself was buttonholed by the Press.

The Press of Stheno consisted of the lawyer's clerk, who received a nominal retainer from a press-bureau in Athens to send news of accidents, earthquakes, homicides and so on. He had prepared, he said, a short telegram to be sent by tomorrow's boat to an associate on Santorin who would relay it by cable to the head office. It read:

> Michali Papastavros of Stheno accidentally petrified yesterday while digging southern end Phorkos Stop Relics found—miracle suspected Stop Ecclesiastical authorities being informed.

"I am afraid they will query the word 'petrified,' said the Press, "but that can't be helped. If they do I shall have to say 'turned to stone,' and blow the expense."

Jimsy was most polite.

"Your telegram is correct," he said, "but I think the message should be expanded and made perhaps a little more authoritative. I will pay for the cable. Shall we go and have a drink?"

Jimsy, the Press, and the interpreter, went to a café, and there Jimsy drafted the following message:

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Please give following to Reuter for widest distribution Stop Mr James Carew the British archaeologist today announced in Stheno that one of his workmen M Papastavros was turned into stone after uncovering Gorgon's eyes in pre-Minoan type beehive Danish site south Phorkos Stop Beehive contains many petrified human figures Stop Eyes in safe keeping Stop Full despatch follows Stop Georgopoulos Press Agent Stheno.

"There," said Jimsy. "Send that off by tomorrow's boat, and if we are not both in the headlines of every newspaper in Europe and America by Saturday, may I be turned to stone."

The message was sent, but Jimsy was not in the headlines on Saturday, or any other day. One thing he had overlooked was that Dr. Makkas had caught the steamer for Santorin the very day he left the camp, and by this time was in Athens. And Dr. Makkas, while travelling homewards, had had leisure for thought. Because he would and could have no part in the Gorgon story, was no reason why he should not share in the glory of having discovered the beehive tomb and the unique figures it contained. They were there to be seen; sensational enough to satisfy the wildest dreams of any excavator. Jimsy had not pledged him to secrecy. He was a qualified archaeologist, which Jimsy was not, and his word would be accepted.

On arriving in Athens, Makkas went straight to Reuter's office. The result was that, three days before the arrival of Jimsy's own message, the newspapers of Europe and America had received news that Dr. Makkas of the Archaeological Institute at Athens had, with his partner Mr. James Carew, uncovered a prehistoric beehive tomb on Phorkos containing naturalistic stone figures of unknown date, but sculptured with a skill exceeding that of Phidias, Michael Angelo, or Canova. The more popular papers took no notice of this item of news; the serious ones printed it, without prominence, and asked their archaeological experts to comment. The experts replied that, without seeing the figures, any worth-while comment would be impossible. One or two suggested to their editors that they might care to send them out to Phorkos.

Accordingly, when Jimsy's own "Gorgon" cable was received, the newspapers looked upon it as a silly leg-pull. Somebody, for private ends, was making public fun of an obscure Mr. James Carew. With two exceptions, they took no notice of it whatsoever. The exceptions were *The Times* and the *Daily Hooter*. *The Times* sent the story to Mr. Bernard Darwin, suggesting that it might be used for a

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Fourth Leader, and a very amusine one he wrote, speculating upon which of the many classical metamorphoses might be the next to recur. But the *Hooter* felt that there might be a "story" behind the hoax, and that even Dr. Makkas's claims about the strange statuary, although of little interest to their own readers, would have to be investigated, and that the *Hooter* might do worse than be first on the spot. Within twenty-four hours Professor Digges and Charlie Grubb, their most facetious story-maker, were flying out to Athens, with orders to find their way to Stheno and make contact with Mr. Georgopoulos, Press Agent.

Meanwhile Jimsy decided to remain in Stheno, until the news should break upon an astonished world. For he felt pretty sure that reporters would seek him out by helicopter. It would never do for him to be "not at home" when one of these buzzing machines descended, as it must, either in venizelos Square or upon the quay. Meanwhile he hoped to hear the news break from the island's one wireless-set in working order which was housed in the Mayor's favourite café. Jimsy's first duty, of course, was to visit the old man in the Castle, the legal proprietor of the contents of Jimsy's tobacco-pouch. He found the old fellow in the highest spirits. At first his pleasure at the Mayor's announcement that his rations were to be doubled had been in the ascendant. A meal on the plate is worth two eyes in a pouch to a malnourished man. But now that he had eaten his first double meal, he was full of congratulations to Jimsy. Although he had always known that the exploits of his ancestor Perseus had been historical, not mythical, he had been made sadly aware, throughout his life, that this was not the world's view, or indeed that of any living person but himself. So it was delightful that he had been proved right.

"Let me see those eyes now," he said to Jimsy, stretching out his hand. "We have a saying in Greece, you know, that seeing is believing."

"It wouldn't be in this case," said Jimsy. "A stone man can believe nothing."

The old man was highly amused at his own blunder. He next raised the question of the custody of the precious eyes. As their proprietor it would be only right, he said, that he should take care of them; he had an egg-box, and several cartons. But when, through the interpreter, Jimsy had explained to him how lethal the objects were; the dangers from theft or accident; the absolute necessity of keeping them under lock and key, and preferably in an underground vault, the old chieftain reluctantly gave in. Jimsy did not mention that at the moment they were in his own hip-pocket.

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The days of waiting for news, for the bursting of his bombshell, were the happiest of Jimsy's life, had he but known it. With everybody looking him straight in the face, with a unique achievement to his credit, with a Gorgon's eyes in his tobacco-pouch, Jimsy's lifelong suspicions and resentments had abated. For the first time he experienced the pleasure of being an averagely decent human being, instead of a warped misanthrope. For three or four days Jimsy was a nice man and, for all his impatience, enjoyed it. Even the surprising lack of any mention of the Gorgon "on the air" from Athens could not seriously ruffle Jimsy's new contentment.

On the afternoon of the fourth day after the despatch of Jimsy's message, the Santorin steamer arrived. Jimsy, still expecting a helicopter, did not go down to the quay, but, sitting with the Mayor, watched its arrival from the café-terrace. The first passengers off the gang-plank were Charlie Grubb, an interpreter and Professor Digges, in that order. Grubb was not a bad little chap; brash, and a "go-getter," as he had to be to hold down his job, but one who preferred persuasion to bullying when on pursuit of a "story." Professor Digges was learned, shy and pessimistic, after a long career of excavating relic which had turned out to be of later date than he had hoped. He had a foreboding, which was to be proved correct, that he had come all this way for nothing. The usual crowd was on the quay, and Grubb, as he stepped ashore, asked his interpreter to enquire from the crowd at once, and in a loud voice, for Mr. Georgopoulos, Press Agent. Mr. Georgopoulos, who had never believed in the helicopter but had entertained hopes of the steamer, pushed his way forward and introduced himself. He quickly told the visitors of the whereabouts of Mr. James Carew, and offered to conduct them at once to the café-terrace.

The café-terrace was small and crowded with square wooden tables and iron chairs. It was raised a few feet above the level of the street, which had no houses on its seaward side. A few stone steps led up from street to terrace.

Because of the arrival of the steamer, the only customers at the tables were the Mayor and Jimsy. There was no question as to which was which; the tubby little Mayor with hair *en brosse* and alpaca jacket was clearly a native, whereas Jimsy, long-limbed, fair-haired, in a clean linen shirt and grey flannel trousers, clearly was not. What Grubb was quite unprepared for was Jimsy's face. For an instant, as he mounted the steps, he saw it in profile: that huge tapir-like nose, that complete absence of chin, that flaming birthmark. By the time Jimsy had turned full-

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face to greet the visitors, Mr. Grubb's curiosity had yielded to his kind heart. Approaching Jimsy with outstretched hand, the reporter looked, not at Jimsy, but at the air all round his head.

In a flash Jimsy's new-born niceness fell from him. "The bloody hypocrite," he thought, flooded in an instant with all the ancient, hot resentment. When Professor Digges, too, remembering his nurse's teaching about the sinfulness of staring, gazed at a point beyond Jimsy's shoulder, it was almost too much. But he recollected his imminent triumph, which was to make him humbug-proof for good, and took himself in hand. Charlie Grubb went straight to the point. Professor Digges, he explained, had come to examine and to report upon the stone figures in the tomb, but he, Grubb of the *Daily Hooter,* wanted to know about the leg-pull. The blankness of Jimsy's expression surprised him. Surely the bad-form joke, sent out over Mr. Georgopoulos's name, must have got back to Stheno by this time?

"The hoax," he said. "The Gorgon story!" And he handed Jimsy a typed copy of Jimsy's own despatch. Jimsy rose to his feet. His first impulse was to knock the little reporter down. But there was something frank and disarming about Grubb's manner which absolved him from personal responsibility. Jimsy sat down again. The little man, after all, was his first contact with the world's press. The truth, not a punch in the face, was the thing to give him.

Jimsy gave him the truth, speaking, if not clearly, which needs a roofed mouth, at any rate calmly and deliberately.

Charlie Grubb grinned. So it's me, he thought, not him, that's having his leg pulled. The nerve! But we'll soon see. He decided to play up a little.

"And where, Mr. Carew, are the eyes now?"

"In my pocket," said Jimsy.

"You don't say!" said Charlie. "Can I see them?"

"You bloody fool!" shouted Jimsy, beginning to tremble. "Do you want to be turned to stone?"

"I'll risk that. Just one peep, Mr. Carew!"

"I tell you these are Gorgon's eyes. They petrified my workman, Michali Papastavros. And they'll do the same to you."

"Not me, they won't," said Charlie. "I was born Gorgon-proof." He grinned again.

"You call me a liar, do you?" Jimsy was shouting mad.

"No, no, Mr. Carew. Only a joker."

Jimsy was beside himself. All the accumulated resentments of twenty-seven years came in that instant to a head, and exploded. He had always said he would "show them," and by God he would! He put his hand to his hip-

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pocket, whipped out the tobacco-pouch, closed his eyes, tore away the flap, and shook out the twin balls into the hollow of his palm. He closed his fist again, shot out his arm, and opened his fingers.

"All right, peep" he yelled, closing his fist and opening his eyes a second later. It was fortunate that the height of the terrace above the street, and the fact that the table at which the Mayor and Jimsy had been sitting was set back against the wall of the café, effectively shielded, by a matter of inches, the eyes of the gaping crowd from even a glimpse of Jimsy's hand. Had it not been so, the street would have been made impassable by a segment of massed statuary. As it was, the result of the explosion, under intolerable strain, of Jimsy's pent-up rage was, considering everything, remarkably small. The effigy of the late Charles Grubb was still grinning. That of the late Professor Digges still looked mildly pessimistic. That of the late interpreter had a puzzled expression, but this was entirely due to his perplexity over the words "leg-pull" and "hoax." The Mayor had shut his eyes when the tobacco-pouch appeared. Nobody else was petrified except, figuratively, Jimsy himself.

It was not the shock of the crime which, in his sudden rage, he had committed that momentarily struck Jimsy motionless. On the contrary, it was the immense, the towering sense of power, of triumphant, irresistible power, that held him captive. When, in a matter of seconds, movement returned to him, he could almost have thrown his arms round the white, cold neck of the reporter to thank him for discovering to Jimsy his new potency. For Jimsy had now, there was no doubt about it, the world at his mercy. He who can petrify, is King.

He exaggerated, of course. But as far as the little world of Phorkos went, Jimsy could, for a time at least, do as he liked. He had narrowly escaped petrifying some scores of people by accident. Let the rest, then, do as he bid them, or . . .

Jimsy's first motion was to return the "eyes," under cover of his fingers, to the pouch, and the pouch to his pocket. His next was to look at the Mayor. The Mayor's eyes were still tightly closed. Jimsy shook him by the shoulder.

"Wake up," he said. "They're safe in my pocket again."

The Mayor looked at the three statues, and shuddered. Jimsy called for his own interpreter, who usually slept on a chair in the café during Jimsy's sessions with the Mayor, but had been woken by Jimsy's final yell.

"Tell Mr. Mayor," he said, "that the little man in front committed suicide—or should I say suipetrifaction? ha! ha! The others, poor chaps, were turned to

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stone by sheer accident. He had better explain it to the people."

It certainly was high time. For the crowd, surprised by Jimsy's almost maniacal yell, were jostling up the steps on to the terrace. They gaped, amazed, at the three effigies. And then they turned their eyes on Jimsy. They were Greeks, with a venerable and scrupulously observed code of hospitality to strangers. Jimsy did not at all like the looks in those fierce black eyes. He backed himself up against the café wall.

"But tell them first," he said hurriedly to the interpreter, "tell them from me, that I have the Gorgon's eyes here, in this pouch." He took the pouch from his pocket and held it up.

"Tell them," he continued, "to beware lest there be further unfortunate accidents. Tell them that I, the custodian of these sacred relics whose power they have seen, advise them strongly to go quietly to their businesses or their homes."

The crowd, without waiting for the Mayor to speak, took Jimsy's advice and went.

"I am sorry about those two," said Jimsy to the Mayor, pointing to the life-like statues of Professor Digges and the interpreter. "They got in the line of fire. It was just bad luck. But the little man asked for it. It was suicide."

The Mayor was a brave man. "It was murder," he said.

"Mr. Mayor," said Jimsy. "You have been a good friend to me, and I am obliged to you. But if you are going to take that line, I may have to—er—to show you something."

The Mayor shut his eyes.

"Show away," he said.

Jimsy laughed. "I didn't mean now," he said. "But we had better come to an understanding. I want no more stone men on this island—I want live men to work for me, to make me comfortable, and to do my bidding. I shall not interfere with your own functions, or with the administration. I shall not expect much, for I have simple tastes, but what I need I mean to have. The digging promises well. We shall soon, you can be sure, have plenty of visitors to Medusa's shrine. They will spend money. We shall be a very happy family."

"Bossed by a murderer?" asked the Mayor.

"Now, now," said Jimsy, happily fingering the pouch.

The Mayor reflected. He was utterly helpless at the moment. He couldn't live with his eyes shut. And even if he managed to capture Jimsy and give him over to justice, what court would listen for a moment to a charge of murder by wilfully, and with malice aforethought, exposing the eyes of a Gorgon? Nobody had seen what happened. He himself knew it, because he had heard Jimsy's yell of "All right, peep!" But Jimsy would

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plead that Mr. Grubb could have shut his eyes, or looked the other way. Jimsy was a murderer all right; but it could never be brought home to him. He himself, perhaps, some day, with a rifle—but the Mayor was far too law-abiding to pursue such thoughts. He threw up the sponge. He must do his best for his people.

"Very well," said the Mayor.

Jimsy had no doubts what to do next. He did not quite trust the Mayor. He did not trust the people at all, after seeing that look in their eyes. It would be difficult, he felt, with Charlie Grubb's grinning, and the Professor's melancholy, effigies standing there on the café-terrace, for the inhabitants to recapture, or share, the mood of the few who had attended the obsequies of Michali Papastavros. It would be unsafe, at any rate for the present, to rely on the "holy relics" notion taking hold of the Phorkians at large. Decidedly, he must make himself more secure.

After requesting the interpreter to go and buy a square of the best chamois-leather obtainable, Jimsy, holding the tobacco-pouch prominently in his right hand, crossed the square to his lodgings. Such few people as were about slunk into side-streets. "So I am suspect," thought Jimsy. "But what matter; they are afraid." Arrived at his lodgings, Jimsy locked himself into his bedroom, and occupied his mind, while waiting for the interpreter to return from his shopping, with plans for his new life as the unofficial Dictator of Phorkos.

The interpreter knocked at the door, Jimsy opened it wide enough to admit a piece of chamois-leather, and sat down at his table. It was lucky that he had remembered to drop his camp housewife into his bag before leaving the diggings. For Jimsy was a pretty good cobbler, and with the scissors and stout thread in the housewife he soon contrived, from the chamois-leather, a pair of finger-stalls, one for the little finger of each hand. He next snipped off the end of each finger-stall, leaving holes that would expose about a third of each "eye," bound the edges of the holes thus made with patch-thread as if they were button-holes, closed his own eyes, extracted those of the late Gorgon from his pouch, and dropped them into the tips of the finger-stalls. He next bound patch-thread tightly round the stalls just above the "eyes," isolating them in snug pockets, and contrived a couple of wash-leather caps to fit over the tips of the finger-stalls, but long enough to be instantly withdrawn, if neccessary by his teeth. Lastly, he drew the stalls over his little fingers and made them fast with tapes tied round his wrists.

Jimsy now felt that, except in the dark, he was a match for all comers. A finger-tip can be pointed, with extreme rapidity, for-

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ward, sideways, or backwards, and with two finger-tips, the field of fire can be much enlarged. For quickness on the draw he had two unrivalled weapons, and weapons which, provided he could attract his attacker's eyes to his hands, were incapable of missing. At night he must either sleep in artificial light, or lock himself up in some place far more secure than these lodgings; by day he would undoubtedly be master of Phorkos. For a second time Jimsy felt like a god, but like a god, this time, who meant to make the most of his almightiness. There were one or two things to be looked to immediately, and Jimsy lost no time in getting to work. First, it was as well, if he was to walk freely about the town, that the population should be made aware that he carried the lethal "relics" in his finger-tips. Secondly, he had no intention of letting the steamer leave for Santorin except at his own will and with passengers holding permits signed by himself. Thirdly, he meant to live, for greater security, in the Castle, and there would be need both of furniture and of strong men or mules to carry it. (For no vehicle could hope to negotiate the goat-track that led to the postern.) Jimsy foresaw for himself a busy afternoon.

In the matter of spreading knowledge of the deadly finger-stalls, there was little difficulty. Since Jimsy had disappeared into his lodgings, the whole town had visited the café-terrace to stare at the stone men, and to discuss the new miracle. There was already a disposition among many of the people, scared as they had been at the first shock of a public petrifaction, to opine that Mr. Grubb, like Michali Papastavros, must unwittingly have offended the "Relics." And when Jimsy and his interpreter crossed the square to the café they found a sizeable swarm of citizens standing, in animated and interchangeable groups, about and upon the café-terrace. Grubb's small figure was hidden by the moving throng; the still white faces of the lankier Professor Digges and his interpreter gazed, very still and steadfast, above the shifting black heads of the crowd.

Jimsy mounted the steps to the terrace, the people making a lane for him, and climbed upon a chair placed against the wall of the café. He held out his two hands, the little fingers of each hand alone extended, and, with the interpreter translating sentence by sentence, made a simple little speech.

"My people," he said, "I think I may call you that since I have in these two finger-tips of mine the means of turning you all instantly to stone. But, my people, I have no intention of doing anything of the sort, provided you obey me. My commands will be few and simple. By agreement with his lordship—an agreement which I

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propose to make later on today—I shall live in the Castle, comfortably I hope, but not luxuriously. I have no intention of interfering with Mr. Mayor, the police, or the laws under which you live. I myself shall devote myself to digging, and to building and arranging a museum which I have no doubt will be the most celebrated in the world. And the world will flock here to see it. You must busy yourselves with building hotels for them to stay in, and stocking shops for them to buy in. But from time to time I may demand something, or some service, from each or all of you. In these occasions you will satisfy my demands instantly or—or be taken to the statuary-room in the museum. I think that is all, thank you. No, one more thing: pray stay where you are until Mr. Mayor—who will please step up here after this meeting—has chosen from among you those who will supply, and those who will carry up, the furnishings of the Castle. I shall also need a cook."

Jimsy held out his hands once again, little fingers out-stretched, and descended from his chair. After explaining to the Mayor his very moderate requirements at the Castle, Jimsy went down to the quay and sent for the Master of the steamer. To this bluff sailor he explained the use of the finger-stalls, and his rule about permits. The Master, before sailing, was to call on Jimsy for his personal mail. Having visited the café-terrace, the Master was, as Jimsy had expected, entirely at his service. The last formality was to visit the old chieftain and to commandeer the Castle. Jimsy climbed the stony path, practising all-round pointings with his fingers as he climbed, the interpreter bending and dodging behind. The old man, who had heard all about the affair on the café-terrace and Jimsy's speech, was standing in the doorway of the keep to receive him. There was a certain magnificence about him.

"It has been a great satisfaction to me, Mr. Carew," he said, "to hear that the story of my great ancestor, Perseus, has now been publicly proved to be history, not legend. I am much beholden to you. But I should be unworthy of my name and blood if I surrendered my Castle to you. You must, I fear, find other accommodation."

The interpreter construed, and Jimsy bowed.

"I see your point, sir," he said. "And you will certainly make a noble statue, standing there to gaze over your ancient demense. I promise you that you shall be left where you are, although we may have to bring you forward a few feet to clear the doorway." Jimsy then stepped back a pace or two and aligned his little fingers upon the old man's face.

"Could you manage to look just a leetle bit pleasanter?" he said, in the wheedling tone of a photog-

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rapher. The speed with which the old gentleman closed his eyes, dropped upon all fours, and began to crawl back into the doorway was astonishing in one of his age.

"All that I have is yours, Master!" he yelled.

Jimsy pulled him up to his feet.

"I am most grateful, sir," he said. "What about a rent of a hundred drachmas a day for these new lodgings of mine?"

The proud old pauper kissed Jimsy's hand.

The first of the Mayor's impressed working-party carrying up carpets and mattresses and lamps were already at the postern when Jimsy turned to descend to the town. That evening Jimsy sat in his living-room in the Castle writing his first detailed despatch to the world's press and he slept, with the door double-locked, the small high window barred and shuttered, and several lamps burning in the room. For the first time in his life Jimsy was afraid of the dark. Early next day a boat was sent to the diggings to fetch four of the workmen protecting the tomb. They were all devoted to Jimsy, and on subsequent nights they kept guard, turn about, on the narrow postern in the Castle's outer wall. Like most of the islanders, they had the knack of becoming armed men without recourse to any armoury. Next morning Jimsy walked down to the town and handled his message to Mr. Georgopoulos, ordering that rather frightened Press Agent, who knew the ropes, to despatch it from Santorin to the *Daily Hooter*. Angry as he had been with Charlie Grubb for his sceptical levity, he was angrier still with the world's press that had so far taken no notice of him whatever. The *Daily Hooter* had at least sent not only the inadequate Grubb, but a real Professor of Archaeology, and the *Daily Hooter* should be rewarded with the melancholy but undeniable "scoop" of first recording the fate of its emissaries. Jimsy even went to the quay to see Mr. Georgopoulos off by the steamer, which he directed to sail at once. There were to be no permits for other passengers on this trip. What Jimsy did not know was that Mr. Georgopoulos carried with him his own version of events for his Athens correspondent, and that the Captain had in his pocket a letter, handed to him at midnight, from the Mayor of Stheno to the Inspector of Police at Santorin. For the sergeant and two policemen who lounged about Stheno in good weather, but avoided crowds, rows and rain, were a detachment from the more powerful force, consisting of an inspector, two sergeants, and a dozen policemen, which had its headquarters on Santorin.

Jimsy had a busy morning. The sudden and early departure of the steamer upset many of the fisher-

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men and fruit-growers whose crops and crates were left upon the quayside, and Jimsy feeling it important to be popular before the darkness of another night should descend to disarm him, had to negotiate with them about compensation for those perishable goods. Then the priest came to confer with him about the three statues on the café-terrace. Jimsy would have liked to leave them there as a constant reminder to the people, but the priest, who had no hopes of guidance from his procrastinating superiors for many days to come, was insistent that they should be moved to the cemetery. Jimsy pointed out that they were undoubtedly Protestant, and in the case of the Professor probably agnostic; but the priest maintained that whereas that was a good reason for not holding a burial service, it was highly unbecoming, if not indecent, to leave the poor fellows among the tables at which people were eating and drinking. The Mayor sided with the priest, and Jimsy felt it prudent to give way. Ropes and a mule-cart were sent for, and with a good deal of shouting and sweating the three effigies were hauled away and laid, side by side, within the cemetery walls.

Apart from this minor defeat, Jimsy was not altogether happy about this conference with the priest, who had considerable influence in the town. For when Jimsy, for whom the "holy relics" view of the Gorgon's eyes was the one most favourable to his plans, again reminded the priest of the story of Uzzah, as an explanation of Charlie Grubbs' sad fate, the priest had pointed out the unfitness of Jimsy's finger-stalls as a resting place for such sacred and wonder-working objects, and had pleaded for a suitable casket, preferably of gold or silver, to be kept in the church. Jimsy's reply of "All in good time" was weak, and he knew it. He began to speculate in his own mind as to how soon he would be compelled to add the statue of an ecclesiastic to the island's growing collection of such things. Although Jimsy had never heard of Lord Acton, the truth of that eminent Victorian's famous dictum was once again being proved in his anxious self-communings. Feeling a little nervous, he called at the grocer's for a few empty paper bags which he stuffed into the side-pocket of his jacket.

The steamer arrived at Santorin in the later afternoon. Mr. Georgopoulos at once repaired to the post-office, and the Captain of the steamer sought out the Inspector of Police. By next morning both the manager of the *Daily Hooter* and the Inspector at Santorin were taking steps. Although both Jimsy and the Mayor, in their respective messages, had narrated the bald truth about the events on

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the café-terrace, neither of these two gentlemen was able to regard the messages as strictly factual. The manager of the *Daily Hooter* did, however, abandon the "hoax" theory for the opinion that Mr. James Carew was a raving, and possibly a dangerous, lunatic. The fact that no news whatever had come from either Grubb or the Professor made him anxious. It was possible that this madman had indeed made away with them. He decided to put through a call to the British Embassy in Athens, and ask that the Greek police should clear the matter up.

To the Inspector of Police at Santorin the thought of lunacy also occurred, but in this case the lunatics were his old acquaintance the Mayor of Stheno and the Captain of the steamer. He recognised the Mayor's handwriting; he listened to the Captain, looking as normal a tanned sea-dog as ever, describing the petrifaction of the three visitors. But petrifaction was something that just did not happen. There was only one thing to do, to comply with the Mayor's request and to go and see for himself. Early next day he boarded the steamer with a sergeant and six men, all armed with carbines and revolvers, and set sail for Stheno. The Captain, he had to admit to himself, appeared to be perfectly sane. All the same, he both watched and humoured him as he stood by him on the bridge of the little vessel. The steamer was more than half-way to Phorkos when a telegram from Athens arrived at the Inspector's office in Santorin directing him to take a sergeant and six men, armed with carbines and revolvers, to Stheno, there to investigate the reported death of two Englishmen and an interpreter, and to arrest, if necessary, a suspected lunatic called James Carew. The Inspector had anticipated his orders neatly enough.

In the late afternoon the steamer was sighted approaching Stheno, and the usual crowd began to gather on the quay. Jimsy, the interpreter, as always, by his side, was among the first to take post near the landing-stage, but with his back against the wall of the small stone building belonging to the steamship company. As the steamer entered the little harbour, he was taken aback to see on board of it, not, as he had expected, only the Captain, Mr. Georgopoulos, and the deckhand, but seven or eight other passengers. He then remembered that he had forgotten to tell the Captain that incoming, as well as outgoing, passengers must carry permits. When, however, the steamer was within a couple of hundred yards of the quay, Jimsy, who had good eyes, recognised the uniforms and the carbines of the police.

Although Jimsy was by now regarded by the populace crowding

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on to the quay as a man to be dreaded and obeyed, they had no thought of him as a criminal who might interest the police. Only the Mayor and Jimsy himself knew him to be a murderer. Jimsy, conscious of guilt, and, in his ignorance of law, unaware, as the Mayor was not, of the difficulty the law would have in bringing him to book, had no doubt whatever that the police were coming to arrest him. Not only must that be prevented; the police must be given no chance of explaining their presence to the crowd, So, while the boat was tying up, Jimsy made his plan. The wall of the building against which he was leaning was not more than twenty feet from the shoreward end of the gangway. The crowd, seeing the armed policemen about to land, fell back, surprised and a little frightened, from the edge of the quay. The Inspector landed first, followed by the sergeant and his men. The Inspector stood with his back to the crowd, and the sergeant ordered the men to fall in, in single rank, facing the Inspector. The sergeant called them to attention, and took position in line with them, on the right. They were not facing Jimsy, but a half-turn to the right would enable them to do so. Jimsy put his hand into his side-pocket and withdrew one of the grocer's paper-bags. Having been a past-master of the art in his youth, it was a matter of seconds for Jimsy to apply the mouth of the bag to his own, inflate it with his breath and bang it with his other hand. The report of the bursting bag was clean and clear as that of a pistol. All the faces of the police, including that of the Inspector, turned as one face towards the sound of the bang, Jimsy tore the cap from his right little finger-tip, and eight uniformed statues stood motionless before him.

Once again, as on the café-terrace, Jimsy's luck had held. Owing to a pile of crans and crates upon the wharf, holding the fish and fruit for which Jimsy had paid compensation, none of the people stood upon the quay immediately behind the file of policemen. Jimsy had again, by a matter of six feet or so, avoided a wholesale petrifaction of "his" people. Only one small boy, fishing from the rocks six hundred yards to the north of the harbour had happened to glance towards the town, and he fell into the sea, a small squatting effigy grasping a fishing-rod.

Jimsy's mind was getting accustomed, under strain, to working quickly. He must, here and now, give some explanation of his action to the crowd. Moving sideways, back to the wall, he turned the corner of the building and faced the main body of sightseers on the quay. The buzz of voices was becoming clamorous and ex-

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cited, but by exploding a second paper bag Jimsy managed to attract the attention of the denser part of the crowd, now beginning to press forward towards the unmoving and white-faced row of policemen.

"Call for silence," he said to the interpreter, and even those on the ragged edge of the swarm obeyed the call.

"My people," said Jimsy, with his hands extended, "you have just witnessed a sad, but unavoidable, event. You will remember the sudden flight of Dr. Makkas, within an hour of the miracle which occurred at the diggings. I suspected then the real reason for his departure, but, from mistaken loyalty to a colleague, I held my tongue. The time has come to speak. Dr. Makkas, when told by me of the fate of Michali Papastavros, refused to enter the tomb. Why? Because, my people, he saw that by accusing myself or some other member of our party of doing away with Michali, who was certainly no longer alive, he could cause our arrest and trial. You know the law's delays. By the time we had been acquitted, as we must have been, Dr. Makkas would have established himself as the true discoverer of treasures which are about to bring undying fame to Phorkos. What is more, as that cunning and envious man no doubt foresaw, it would have been necessary, for our defence, to remove the statue of Michali, now so miraculously sanctified by the hand of God, to the place of trial, probably in Athens itself. Our holy shrine would have been desecrated. It is probable that a curse, not a blessing, would have been upon this island.

"My people, I have had to take strong measures, but it was done for the sake of your future and that of your children and grandchildren. The consequences may call for all our courage, but with these—" and Jimsy held his hands high—"I am invincible, and God, who has done this marvel for us, will surely not now abandon us."

The interpreter did his best and there were some cheers, but Jimsy was not altogether happy at the result. The people were not dispersing as he had hoped; they were staring, with obvious disquiet, at the statues in uniform, or gathering in groups to argue and gesticulate. Jimsy himself still standing against the wall, was hesitating what to do next when he caught sight of something that made his heart sink. Quickly as his mind and worked after the sudden petrifaction of the police, it had not worked quickly enough. There was a thing he had overlooked. While he had been haranguing the mob, the Mayor, who for once and for his own reasons had forsaken the café to mingle with the crowd, had slipped over the gangway, given a hand to Mr. Georgopoulos

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and the deckhand in casting off, and was now, with his back resolutely turned towards the land, making for the companion-way as the steamer slowly turned in a half-circle towards the mouth of the harbour. Jimsy shouted his loudest; the Captain stood, head averted, facing seawards. It is doubtful whether he even heard Jimsy's cry through the churning and creaking of the venerable steam-boat. Not only had Jimsy's own means of escape gone (for his renewed consciousness of guilt made him unwilling to trust himself to an islander and a fishing-boat), but the one man who knew him to be a murderer, even before the petrifaction of the police, was now out of his power. That the Mayor would start something on a very different scale from that of this contemptible posse of police seemed certain. That the authorities would use bombs or bombardment against one man seemed unlikely. But what about a shower of parachutists? Jimsy's lethal fingers could not point in all directions at once. He did not exactly panic, for he had at least thirty-six hours in which to make his arrangements, but he must make a plan and act upon it without delay.

The main thing was to be, and to remain, where he could never be surrounded. The Castle, with its immense strength and one narrow postern, was the very place. There he would go, and there he would stay. But he must keep his head and not hurry to his refuge. Any sign of fear would lower his prestige and gravely handicap him in the urgent business of victualling the stronghold for weeks, perhaps for months, of siege.

It would have been a relief to Jimsy had he known the real mood of the people at this juncture. They were, in fact, more critical of the Mayor, for forsaking them, than of Jimsy. That the affair of the police would have serious repercussions they knew. But to the independent and self-sufficient Phorkians the sudden arrival of so many armed policemen had been an incivility amounting to outrage, and they preferred the man who had repulsed the aggressors to the man who had run away. Their Mayor had borne a reputation for courage. They felt both betrayed by, and insecure without, their natural champion.

Jimsy, on the other hand, had, by the baseness of his slanderous attack on Dr. Makkas, become even a worse man than he was before, and the more despicable a character, the greater his suspicions and his infirmity. While sitting at a café table with pencil, paper, listing enormous quantities of tinned provisions, dried fruits, fuel, oil and other stocks necessary for a beleagured castle, he betrayed unusual impatience and irritation with the interpreter, whose job it would be to com-

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mandeer these things from a people as prudent as they were penurious. The interpreter indeed, fearing failure, urged Jimsy to accompany him. Where he met with reluctance, a flourish of the fingerstalls might, he felt, do wonders. But by now Jimsy liked to have a wall at his back. During daylight, he decided, the café-terrace, which commanded so much of the town, should be his headquarters. By nightfall Jimsy's vicarious pillage of the inhabitants was well advanced; shops and storehouses had disgorged the bulk of their contents into the narrow streets, and mules had been bespoken for sunrise. The interpreter reported a ready, if sullen, obedience, and in the last of the light Jimsy climbed to his refuge, with much looking over his shoulder on his way. The old chieftain was bidden to descend to Jimsy's old quarters in the town, and Jimsy, with sentries posted, again locked himself into a barred and shuttered room, to pass a restless night made stuffy by oil-lamps. As his sense of power began to diminish, his resentment against the world in general increased.

At dawn the procession of laden mules up the steep and stony track got under way. Jimsy was appalled at the scantiness of the loot, as it lay in inconsiderable heaps against the walls of the outer enclosure. He cursed the worried interpreter, suspected the townspeople of the sin of Ananias, but was forced to admit to himself that final triumph, if it came at all, would not be achieved by tiring out his besiegers. If only he had not let that steamship go!

One piece of good news did reach him. The effigy of the little boy on the rocks had been found, glimmering up from the sea-bed, and recovered by a search-party. For the first time Jimsy knew that the Gorgon's eyes could petrify at six hundred yards. Why not at even longer ranges? He foresaw the possibility of capturing the steamer, of bringing down a plane full of parachutists, before either could unload their complement of armed men. While the parents of the boy were weeping on the rocks, Jimsy was chuckling in the Castle. He must think of a way of attacking, at a distance, the gaze of a pilot or a crew. All the same, he took care to send his interpreter to condole with the small, squatting effigy's family, and to purchase the largest metal wreath to be had.

Meanwhile the Mayor, who had luckily caught a faster boat at Santorin, had arrived in Athens itself. He lost no time, with the help of Mr. Georgopoulos, in putting through a call to the *Daily Hooter*. Avoiding any mention of petrifaction, he confirmed the deaths of Charlie Grubb and the Professor, accused Mr. James Carew of being responsible, and

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suggested that the newspaper should send out a plenipotentiary by the next plane to meet him, the Mayor, at the British Embassy. The reply delighted him. The *Daily Hooter* had already despatched their man, and told the Mayor where he was to be found.

The *Daily Hooter* man was a live wire. The Mayor found him busy with arrangements for chartering a helicopter just in time to stop such folly. There must be no landing on Phorkos. What they needed was a light plane equipped for taking photographs. The *Daily Hooter*'s money soon secured such an aircraft, and the Mayor briefed the pilot by means of a rough sketch. Here was the quay with the eight stone policemen; there was the cemetery, with the statues of Grubb, Digges, and their interpreter laid in a row by the wall; here, at the southern tip of the island, was the beehive tomb, It was difficult to get the pilot to understand that he must direct his camera, but never his eyes, at these places, and that he must rely upon a reflection of his target in a looking-glass attached to the outer edge of the cockpit. But his fee was generous enough to make him fall in with any whim.

"And now," said Mr. Georgopoulos to the Mayor, "I will take you to the Chief of Police."

"You will not," said the Mayor. "You will take me to the Ministry of Public Health."

The conference at the Ministry of Health, between the Mayor and the *Daily Hooter* man on one side of the table, and on the other side a succession of officials, each senior to the one before him, and concluding with the Minister himself, was a long and difficult one. Indeed at one point it had to be adjourned for a couple of hours or more, until the pilot of the light aircraft returned from Phorkos with his photographs, and even then the Ministry yielded to the Mayor's pleas only on condition that all expenses whatsoever should be borne by the *Daily Hooter*. Fortunately the representative of that paper, hardened sceptic as he was, could smell a good "story" and, his instructions being to discover, at all costs, the truth about Professor Digges and Charlie Grubb, he undertook to indemnify the Ministry for whatever sum the Mayor's plan might cost it. So it was late in the day when the Mayor at length visited the Chief of Police, astounded that official with the pilot's photographs of the Santorin contingent standing at attention, with stone-white faces and hands, on the quay at Stheno, and restored his spirits with a letter from the Minister of Health requesting him to hold his hand and take no action until what was already being called "the Mayor's plan" had been given its chance.

The Mayor had had a busy day.

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A hundred and twenty miles south, on Phorkos, the day had also brought its excitements. Jimsy had remained in the Castle enclosure, superintending the rearrangement, round the walls of the larger room in the keep, of the stores that had been dumped by the sweating and unsmiling carriers. About midday one of his sentries shouted. Jimsy ran to the postern, and saw a small aeroplane approaching from the north, its nose already tilted downwards. There was no possible landing place on the island, but the plane's rapid descent showed that it was bent on reconnaissance. It was a civilian plane, and unlikely to be armed. But it might be about to drop leaflets from the Government or the Mayor, with instructions which could do Jimsy no good, at best. He must somehow attract the pilot's attention. The report of a rifle would be no more effective than that of a paper bag. The signal must be unusual. He sent a man to snatch a sheet off Jimsy's bed, but it came too late. The aircraft had already dived to fifty feet or so, and was skimming the quay well below the level of the spot where Jimsy stood. Having passed almost directly over the heads of the eight statues in uniform it rose again, to circle round and make a second dive in the contrary direction. Now it was higher than Jimsy, and he and his man flapped the sheet madly against the sombre background of the castle wall. At the same time Jimsy aimed his uncapped fingers at the pilot. Nothing happened, And as the aircraft turned, Jimsy saw a bright flash at the pilot's right shoulder, where the sun caught for an instant the arrangement of mirrors prescribed by the Mayor. Then he knew. It was a bitter thought that Jimsy's device for securing the Gorgon's eyes in safety should now be used against himself.

Jimsy had the chagrin of watching the circumspect young pilot accomplish his second sweep over the quay, then turn seawards, circle, and return very low to fly over the cemetery. Photography, of course. After two runs over the cemetery the plane took a wide sweep over the harbour and away down the coast to the southern end of Phorkos. In ten minutes it could be seen, well out to sea, gaining height as it returned towards the north.

All that day and the next Jimsy's interpreter spent in the café, listening to the wireless. But no word came to show that Jimsy's sensational message to the *Daily Hooter* had attracted any attention in the outside world. That somebody was thinking about Jimsy and his exploits was proved by the visit of the aircraft. But that somebody was keeping his plans, whatever they might be, to himself.

The suspense was not improv-

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ing Jimsy's temper, and it was undermining his self-confidence. Feeling certain of being attacked, he must make up his mind how best to defend himself in the event. He had already dismissed, as has been seen, any thought of flight in a fishing-boat. And in any case he was still obsessed with the thought of his own overwhelming power of petrifaction. With only a narrow postern to defend, he would surely be master of all comers by day. And by night, back to the wall in a lighted room, he could surely go on making stones of his attackers until the doorway was blocked with statues and they would be glad to make peace on his own terms?

There was one point which cause him anxiety. Even by day his attackers would be able, by keeping their eyes on the ground as they climbed, to get within a yard or two of the postern without risk. The postern, as has been told, was on the landward side of the outer wall of the enceinte. Within a few yards of that wall, a rocky precipice rose abruptly for a hundred feet at least, and, for the last ten yards before it reached the postern, the path to it led through a passage between wall and precipice only a few yards wide. After weighing the losses and gains, Jimsy decided that, in so narrow an approach as the postern itself and the ten yards beyond it, one finger carrying an "eye" in the tip would be as good as two. He decided to dig a trench, four feet deep and four feet wide, across this passage from rock to wall, and to place the second "eye" upon a white dinner-plate at the bottom of the trench. An attacker keeping his own gaze steadfastly upon the ground as he advanced, and coming upon the trench, must of necessity look into it, to judge how best to negotiate the obstacle. And a shiny white plate, in the very middle of the open pit, was bound to catch his eye. True, the digging of this trench, which would be known all over the town, must inevitably damage Jimsy's prestige. It would be taken for what it was, a sign of fear. But, now that life itself was at stake, prestige hardly counted. Jimsy must rely on his good Gorgon's eyes, and on them alone. Damn it, he thought, I have only got to call the whole town into Venizelos Square, get my back against a wall, and petrify the lot, and they know it.

The digging of the trench occupied the rest of that day. The only annoyance was that when, in the last of the daylight, Jimsy descended into the trench to arrange, with his eyes shut, the plate and the "eye," the statue of a too curious shepherd-boy slid over the top of the precipice and was shattered on the path within a few yards of Jimsy's head. It would cost him another wreath, but at least reminded him to send down

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one of the guards to the café, with orders to the interpreter to warn the town that the Castle was now "out of bounds."

The next day was entirely without incident but during the ensuing night Jimsy's bodyguards, together with the cook, deserted, taking with them the larger fragments of the shepherd boy. Jimsy was now entirely alone in his stronghold.

He cooked his own breakfast, and later went outside the outer walls of the Castle to a point where, on the seaward side, he could watch the comings and goings in the town below him. At eleven o'clock most of the inhabitants went in procession to the cemetery, to bury the bits and pieces of the shepherd boy. Jimsy wondered whether his wreath was among the rest. It was a wonderful morning, there was neither wave nor wind on the sea, the island of Santorin, pale amethyst, was just visible to the north; the swifts were shrilling about the keep, and the trill of the cicadas was incessant. None of which Jimsy even noticed. He looked alternately at the town below him, at the sky to the northward, and at the sea which, today, so faithfully reflected that sky.

It was about noon when Jimsy first spotted the steamer. As it slowly grew larger, it struck him that it was not "the" steamer, but "a" steamer, larger and a great deal speedier than the one in which the Mayor had sailed. All steamers approaching a port appear, to those watching from the shore, to move with irritating slowness. To Jimsy, already on edge with suspense, this one seemed all but stationary for whole minutes together; then suddenly he realised how much detail was already to be picked out by a sharp and attentive eye. At one moment he could not make out if there were many or no passengers on the forward deck; at the next he could see a crowd of human figures collected there. Jimsy's heart leapt within him. He had expected a strong force to be sent against him, but that, after hearing the Mayor's own tale, it would remain below-decks on approaching the land. Then it came back to him. The Mayor had escaped on board before the boy on the rocks had been petrified at a distance of six hundred yards. No doubt Mr. Mayor thought of the Gorgon's eyes as a sort of shotgun. He had only seen them work at point-blank range.

At approximately a thousand yards Jimsy "opened fire" with his right little finger. The steamer came steadily on. At five hundred yards Jimsy could see the men on deck moving freely about, and leaning over the rails. He aimed again and again; the range was now shorter than that at which the boy on the rocks had been

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toppled over. His blood ran cold, as the saying is. Could the Gorgon's eyes have lost their power? Was he now a hunted and utterly defenceless criminal? Jimsy ran back into the Castle, and took the sheet from his bed. Returning to his look-out post above the town, he again waved the sheet as he had done so vainly at the aeroplane. By this time the crowd was hastening to the quay to watch the arrival of the steamer. Jimsy was in all their thoughts and many of them glanced up at the Castle to see if he was about. Seeing the white sheet wave, they to it. "Look! He is surrendering." "He is afraid." "He wants to parley." A flicker of upturning faces ran, like cat's paws, over the surface of the crowds. With a little more patience Jimsy might have bagged the lot. But he was in a fever to test the eyes. He dropped the sheet and pointed his fingers. The Gorgon's eyes had not lost their potency. Jimsy saw before him, still and stone-white, four hundred faces at least.

The appalled people of Stheno, bumping against rigid and unyielding neighbours, knocking them down, tripping over them, barking their shins against their oldest friends, their dearest relations, panicked. Many lost their heads and looked up to the source of the disaster, becoming in their turn solid, white, and obstructive. The rest took cover in the nearest building. By the time the steamer was alongside, the quay was deserted.

Shouts from the bridge shamed a couple of officials to leave the shelter of the Steamship Office and, with eyes circumspectly downcast, to catch the mooring-lines and handle the gangway. The disembarkation began.

First came the Mayor, his eyes bent on the ground. Behind him, in single file, came about sixty men, strong, active, and tanned, but without uniform of any sort, not carrying visible arms, but each with a light cord about his waist. Their eyes, like the Mayor's, were downcast, and from time to time each touched the back of the man in front, to avoid loss of contact. So the Mayor had not taken any chances about Medusa's effective range, thought Jimsy. He could not help admiring the discipline of the unexpected troop, who could look over the rail of a steamship while approaching a strange harbour without once raising their eyes from the sea. And yet, he thought, how childish, how laughable. It was not getting to close quarters that was the problem for his attackers. It was the final grapple, and for that they must at last look up.

Jimsy watched, with a sense of power so renewed by the wholesale petrifaction of the crowd and the panic that ensued that he momentarily forgot how desperate

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was his plight, the Mayor and his followers snaking their way through the town. He laughed aloud when the Mayor stumbled over the effigy of an old crony, or had to feel his way, hands outstretched, between a forest of stone figures. But the Mayor could have found his way in the dark. Although blown, shocked and grief-stricken, the game little man emerged, his long train intact, on to the path that led up to the Castle. Slowly and deliberately he began to climb.

Jimsy had one ineffective "shot" at the steamer, and walked slowly back to the postern, pulling after him the light plank he had lain across the four-foot ditch. He would stand in the narrow postern itself and deal, one by one, with such of his attackers who might be able to cross the ditch upon the stone bodies of those who fell into it.

In ten minutes the Mayor, who had paused to recover his breath, came round the corner of the Castle wall. Head bowed, eyes bent, he came steadily on to the edge of the ditch, and fell forward into it literally stone-dead. Jimsy chuckled at the success of his ruse. But his amusement did not last long. The man behind the Mayor, a great strapping good-looking peasant, shouted "Look out!" over his shoulder, paused, and began feeling with one foot over the edge of the pit. He then sat down, turned round, and began to let himself slowly down. When his feet touched ground, he bent down and felt the rigid body of the Mayor with his hands. He then walked slowly along the ditch, measuring with his arms.

"Obstacle," he shouted back. "Four yards long, four feet deep, containing stone body of Mr. Mayor. Keep touch with the wall on the left and follow me." And then he lifted up his head and looked straight at Jimsy with a pair of dark inexpressive eyes. Jimsy uncapped and aimed. The man took no notice but, climbing out of the ditch and feeling for the wall with his left hand, unloosed the cord from his waist and held it in his right. It was a noose.

And now Jimsy knew. The man was blind; they were all blind. That march with the downcast eyes had been nothing but a cunning stroke of the Mayor's, to prevent Jimsy detecting their blindness and making his escape in time. For the first time Jimsy lost his head. Instead of tiptoeing out, past the line of blind men in the passage, and fleeing up the mountain, he panicked and retreated into the Castle yard. The chances of Public Enemy No. 1 escaping from Phorkos by night in a stolen fishing-boat were small indeed, and smaller still the likelihood of reaching a place of safety. But to back through the postern, as he did, meant the end of Jimsy.

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Jimsy's end was not mercifully swift. It was rather mercilessly drawn out, as no doubt he deserved. When the Mayor, at the end of that prolonged conference at the Ministry of Health, had finally persuaded the Ministry to allow him to collect, by means of motor-buses and motor-launches paid for by the *Daily Hooter*, a body of blind men from their homes or institutions on the mainland or the island, he had stipulated that only volunteers must be taken, picked for their strength and resource. Nearly all were peasants; nearly all had been blind from birth; all were accustomed to hard work and rough ground. They had developed the sixth sense of the blind as to the neighbourhood of walls; their sensitive ears could pick up the small betraying sounds of men or animals, even at rest, the rustle of vegetation, the movement of air through a door. It did not seem to them much of a problem to track down, seize, and bind with their cords a man in an enclosure not sixty yards across. At first Jimsy did not quite appreciate this. He saw himself, young and nimble dodging these slow, groping, unseeing men until exhaustion should relax their pursuit, and by some ruse leave the postern for a moment unguarded.

The first man halted at the postern, the second took up his position over against him; between them they could make that narrow exit impassable. The remainder, guided by the leader's quiet voice, entered deliberately, one by one. They looked very slow, very clumsy and tentative, to Jimsy. But when the long string of them crept round by the wall and, then, hands on each other's shoulders, advanced in line towards the keep, Jimsy began to feel less certain of himself. He tiptoed to the well-head, over which a great iron hoop was arched, from which hung the bucket and chain. Should he slide down the chain and stand in the bucket, which hung above the water about twenty feet down? He stood on the wall of the well-head, grasped the hoop in one hand and reached out for the chain with the other. The chain creaked, and the bucket, swinging, rang against the wall below. Jimsy glanced at the blind men; they had heard the creak; their line bulged forward as those in the middle quickened their pace and made towards the well. No, it would be a death-trap.

Next he had a bright idea. The quick bulge in the line had left a gap where the left-hand man had stuck to the wall and dropped his hand from the shoulder of the man on his right, drawn away from him by the loop in the line. Jimsy decided to fill the gap, to become one of his pursuers, to march with them until, failing to find their quarry, they should decide that he

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must, after all, have found a means of escape. He took off his shoes and barefoot, crept towards the gap. As the line drew up to him, he turned about and placed his hand upon the shoulder of the man on the right of the gap. "Euryale," said the blind man, quietly. Jimsy, falling into step, said nothing. "Euryale," said the man again, more distinctly, turning his head towards Jimsy as he did so. This time the man by the wall, a couple of yards from Jimsy's left arm, also turned his head sharply inwards and said "Euryale." Then Jimsy twigged. It was a pass-word; an agreed sign by which his pursuers would avoid capturing each other in this sinister game of blind man's bluff. Jimsy dropped his hand from his neighbour's shoulder and slipped away behind the mass near the wall. His ancient resentment flared up in him till he all but shouted with fury. Why must the password be one of those which Jimsy, with his roofless mouth, could never hope to pronounce? Why must it have an L and an R in it? He began to think that his dangerous scheme of joining the line, if only the password had been Bo, would have assuredly preserved him. It did not occur to him that these men would have smelt him in no time at all.

The man from whose shoulder Jimsy had dropped his hand shouted to give the alarm, and the line broke up to advance, in some confusion, towards the sound of the shout. As Jimsy crept away on his bare feet the sharp pebbles which lay all over the enclosure hurt him cruelly. He must get back his shoes at all costs. He hooted and hallooed.

The Mayor, in his hurry, had briefed, but not rehearsed, his army. Once their line was broken, and the quarry had given tongue, these blind peasants, forgetting the drill, began to hunt on their own. For twenty minutes or so it was a real nursery game. Jimsy, after easily recovering his shoes, danced nimbly hither and thither, uttering loud cries of derision. The pack blundered into each other, clutched at the air, looked and felt foolish, with "Euryale, Euryale" constantly on their tongues. For all their physical toughness, these simple souls were beginning to feel discouraged.

The man who had marched next to the Mayor, and who now stood with a companion as guardian of the postern, heard the confusion as clearly as if he had watched it. He decided to take command. Shouting for silence in a mountaineer's voice, he ordered the men once again to form line with their backs to the wall, and to sweep the enclosure from front wall to keep, with care to make no gaps, or loops that led to gaps. Pace did not matter. If Jimsy was fool enough to enter the keep, so much the better.

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The men, somewhat shamefaced at their riot, groped for each other, sorted themselves out, and reformed the line. This time it was stretched from wall to wall. Jimsy, panting from his dance, stood by the door of the keep. It did not enter his head to go inside. The deliberately slow motions, the careful discipline, of the blind men's advance, convinced him, at last, that he could never tire them out. He could not jump over them; the way they stopped and listened after each step forward made the idea of crawling between them absurd. The Mayor had won.

The abandonment of hope is always a relief to the nerves. Jimsy suddenly felt calm. Standing as he was on the very spot where he had all but petrified the old chieftain, he was suddenly reminded of what a fine statue the old boy would have made had he not so instantly surrendered. Jimsy drew himself up proudly. If it was to be the end, let the world have a noble effigy of the great James Carew—no, not James, but *The* Carew, "Gorgon" Carew, Discoverer and Petrifier.

Jimsy lifted his head slowly—his head must be held well up, his gaze must be level, his left hand upon his hip, his right foot a little forward. Then suddenly he remembered. It would not be a noble effigy. It would be the statue of a hideous man, with an enormous nose and no chin. It was true there would be no angry birthmark on his marble face. But to immortalise that face in stone —no.

Jimsy's resentment would no doubt have mounted to new heights, but it had no time. In two bounds he was on the wall of the well-head, his finger went up, and a very ugly statue fell headlong into the well, breaking the bucket and claim as it crashed. The blind men had small doubt of what had happened. But, exhorted by their leader by the postern, they methodically swept out both rooms of the keep before calling it a day.

Even posthumous notoriety was denied to Jimsy, just as the "scoop" of the century was denied to the *Daily Hooter*. The emissary of that enterprising and lavish journal had spent an hour or more in photographing, from many angles, not only the prostrate effigies of Charlie Grubb and Professor Digges, but that amazing forest of standing and fallen statues that cluttered the quay, Venizelos Square, and many of the streets of Stheno. When the earthquake took place he was on his way to the southern "diggings" in a fishing-boat. That submarine upheaval, with its epicentre almost exactly beneath the island of Phorkos, is best remembered by the living for the destructive tidal wave which ran, a monstrous mountain of salt

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water, through the Cyclades to the coasts of Greece and Asia Minor. Phorkos itself, all but four hundred feet of the peak, disappeared beneath the sea. Could he have foreseen it, how bitterly would Jimsy have resented so complete, so catastrophic a deletion of the proofs of his extraordinary discovery. To crown all, the one piece of evidence unsubmerged, the thin file of photographs taken by the pilot of the light aeroplane, had been carelessly left by the Mayor at the Ministry of Health. And papers left at Ministries, whether in Athens or elsewhere, are never seen again.

Through Time And Space With Ferdinand Feghoot: LXVI

It was against Ferdinand Feghoot's advice that Ezra P. Crosshatch, Member of the Time Travellers Club and well-known poet, decided to take a Massachusetts vacation during the 17th Century.

"Ah, Feghoot," he cried, "not for me are the suave sins of Byzantium, the sophistications of Second-Empire Paris, the machine-made wickedness of Las Vegas! My soul wants *simplicity!*"

Feghoot knew that Crosshatch had recently spent his New Fulbright with Henry Thoreau wading around Walden Pond, and that he was still under the influence. Therefore he said nothing more. But he was in no way surprised when the poet failed to come back on schedule and the alarm light went on.

As Chairman of the Club's Rescue Committee, Feghoot at once sped back to Salem 1667, where he found Crosshatch exposed in the public pillory. Eggs which urchins had thrown at him stained his clothing, and he looked very unhappy. Sullenly he explained that he had been caught pinching a milkmaid.

"You ought to have warned me," he whined, as Feghoot unfastened his hands. "You never said it would be as awful as *this.*"

"I made myself perfectly clear," replied Ferdinand Feghoot. "I told you you'd find yourself in a simple old two-wrist trap."

—GRENDEL BRIARTON

(See Feghoot advertisement in "F&SF Marketplace", page 129)

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LETTERS

In response to your kind invitation, I opine:—The letters are non-scintillant but I *do* love your replies!

And as long as I am here. . . . Realizing the enormity of the departure from tradition evidenced by the increasing wit, humor and controversial content of recent issues, I wish to thank you for your courage.

In particular, I have happily watched S.F. outgrowing the Horse-Opera tabu on unholy sex; but this Heinlein story is an utter delight. I am, of course, sufficiently elderly and sophisticated to dare admit liking even the theme. (I also enjoyed Anderson's (Poul, that is, not Hans Christian) Three Hearts and Three Lions. Wonder what Bradbury could do with the same angle? Can't you prod him?) The light touch of this Glory Road epic was long overdue and I am charmed and still chuckling. Even if it dribbles off to nothing, the dialog in this installment will have been worth any anti-climax. S.F. is essentially a short story or novelette form, anyway.—B. BENDEAU, Cleveland Ohio.

. . . I'm surprised at Heinlein, I really am. This will leave a bad taste in my mouth for some time to come. If this self-hate filled, rather dull little bedtime story is the SF trend, I'll quit using my precious eyesight in reading it. No doubt in your superior knowledge of life, love, and the pursuit of pleasure you think me a "moralist" (that handy little label used against anyone who dares to disagree with anyone else, second only in withering potency to "communist"). Sorry. I'm less troubled by morals than the Hero. . . . As always we only exchanged morals for other morals. Is enforced sex (through obligation, custom, etc.) any better than restricted? Is it any more intellectual? Is it any freer? . . . I'm not "outraged," don't flatter yourselves, just disappointed and sick at heart. No, I don't believe in censorship, but I *do* recognize a difference between erotic realism and pornography. . . . This book would fail psych tests given it to reveal erotic realism because the story does a beautiful job of twanging that male erotic nerve. For instance: "I won't say I've never bedded a *married* woman nor a *man's* daughter in his *own* house—" a triple loaded statement. . . . A better introduction to this chronicle . . . would be: Britannus (delighted); Caesar, this is wonderful! / Theodotus (repulsed): What?! / Caesar (recovering his sense of humor): Pardon him, Theodotus: he is an "intellectual," and thinks that the customs of any other tribe, being new and novel to him, are vastly superior to those we, who do not properly recognise his brilliance, practice.—ANDREA FULLER, San Jose, Cal.

I read with dismay your introduction to Paul Jay Robbins' story in the August issue, in which you said, ". . . there have been complaints about too much esoteric razzmatazz in these introductions." I am shocked that you would even venture to think that your editing contains too much—ahem!—"razzmatazz." I agree with Mr. Hamilton, who wrote that sometimes you publish too many stories that overemphasize style, but I much prefer

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this to publishing those which underemphasize style. References to Tiresias and the cries of hunting banths are infinitely more desirable than such as . . .* You alone must defend F&SF, the sole bastion of culture in the science fiction field. Do not falter!—ROBERT D. SHEEHAN, Bklyn, N. Y.

* *We omit here a quoted blurb from another SF magazine, evidently composed whilst the editor was suffering from a surfeit of lampreys.*—AD

Stern editor, where are your Stern editorials? I found them interesting and amusing and I'm not the only one. Please bring them back.—HOWARD HUSOCK, South Euclid, Ohio

Will it be possible to make the letter column more of a forum and less of a comment on the stories, specifically speaking?—MRS. JOHN LORENZ, Manchester, Mass.

. . . I think more comment on individual stories is necessary . . . When is Sturgeon going to sequel his *When You Care, When You Love?*—TERRY PARKINSON, Columbus, Ohio

He is working on it now.—AD

I have just finished scanning the atrocious story called *Turn Off The Sky* (August, '63), whatever that means. Horrible! Never in my life have I dreamed of reading of a naked Negro anarchist struggling for anarchy in an anarchial world . . . I do not read your magazine to be made ill ! ! I read Science Fiction as a way to pleasurable thoughts and ideas.—A. J. HILL, Wyomissing, Penna.

I want to thank you for *Turn Off The Sky*. Things like this appear almost nowhere else. Hope you get more like that one.—DAVID SCOTT, Chicago, Ill.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *In our August issue we published a vignette by T P Caravan entitled THE CENSORS: A SAD ALLEGORY. Several readers have called our attention to the fact that a longer version of this story appeared over the same byline in a 1956 issue of OTHER WORLDS, a magazine no longer being published. The author writes " . . . my last submission [to OTHER WORLDS] was in January of 1955. It was an early version of THE CENSORS, quite different in style . . . he [the editor] didn't buy it . . . Without my knowledge he printed it." The author, under his real name, is a member of the faculty of a metropolitan university. We accept his entire good faith in this matter, as—we are sure—our readers accept our own.*

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